ARAM ROSTON on AHMAD CHALABI

THE Nation.

THE FAILED SURGE

NIR ROSEN

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APRIL 21, 2008
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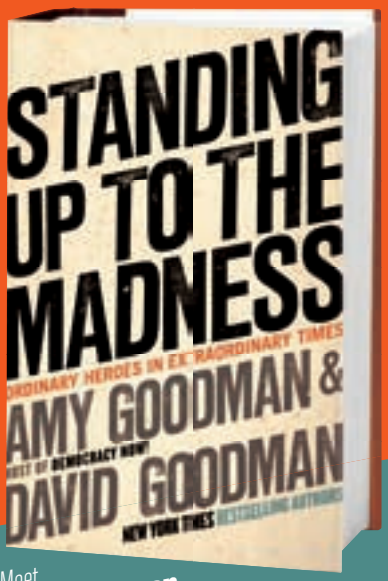

Meet **Amy Goodman** (host of *Democracy Now!*) and **David Goodman** on tour—and celebrate America's greatest power: its grassroots heroes.

Micheal Keel

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4/22	Washington, DC	5/18	Philadelphia, PA
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4/24	Montclair, NJ		

Go to **democracynow.org** for tour details and more.

HYPERION

Letters

Change of Heart & Mind

ASTORIA, N.Y.
Recently I wrote saying that I would not be renewing my subscription because of your endorsement of Barack Obama. But he brought me to his side with his brilliant speech on race (and America), and I now think it would be almost sinful *not* to vote for him. So you were right, and I will be renewing my subscription after all. Thank you.
MARI GORMAN

For Whom Would Jesus Vote?

WEST LAFAYETTE, IND.
I find it difficult to support a magazine that, while claiming to uphold certain values to which I subscribe, would exhibit such blatant disregard of fundamental English grammar as the headline "Who Would Jesus Vote For?" on Bob Moser's March 24 piece on evangelicals. My mother taught for years in the East Bronx to get students to write correct English. I cannot disregard her memory by letting such blatant disrespect for our language to pass unnoticed.
W.L. MCBRIDE

PALM BAY, FLA.
I am a high school English teacher and am mildly amused yet slightly disturbed by the bad grammar on your cover. I tell my students to read your magazine not only for its content but also for its edifying vocabulary and writing style. But I also wish to thank you for keeping me informed over the years with your frankness, good writing and intellectual stimulation.
THOMAS JACKSON

JAMAICA PLAIN, MASS.
So good to read about how some evangelicals' beliefs go beyond the stereotype of supporting Jerry Falwell and his kind. At first I misread the headline as "Who Would Vote for Jesus?" I foresaw a tragicomic article about how the neocon attack machine would go after Jesus for being soft on enemies ("Turn the other cheek"), even for speaking to them, or for bringing up "class war" ("It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven").
MICHAEL WEINSTEIN

OSS—Of Swashbuckling Sages

WASHINGTON, D.C.
Robert Dreyfuss, in "Hothead McCain" [March 24], describes the Office of Strategic Services, predecessor of the CIA, as a "rambunctious, often out-of-control World War II–era covert-ops team." Led by the legendary "Wild Bill" Donovan, the OSS was a visionary, daring, innovative, unorthodox, effective intelligence organization. It abetted Allied victories in North Africa, Europe, Southeast Asia and elsewhere. Donovan recruited an array of "glorious amateurs," as he called them, including Arthur Schlesinger Jr., Ralph Bunche, Arthur Goldberg, Julia Child, John Ford [and *Nation* puzzle setter Frank W. Lewis—*Ed.*]. Many OSS personnel—including my father—risked their lives volunteering for missions behind enemy lines.

Creating a new intelligence service patterned after the OSS is an intriguing notion that deserves serious consideration, not Dreyfuss's casual dismissal.
CHARLES PINCK, *president*
The OSS Society

Terror Experts Speak

WASHINGTON, D.C.
In "Experts in Terror" [Feb. 4], Petra Bartosiewicz made an error in reference to our latest book, *Jihad Incorporated*. Alluding to the book's treatment of the terrorism-related case of Yassin Aref and Mohammed Hossain, Bartosiewicz writes: "Emerson incorrectly cites the Aref and Hossain case as evidence that individuals in the United States are 'directly linked' to the JeI [Jamaat-e-Islami]. With the exception of a single newspaper clip, the only sources cited in the section on the case are government documents from the trial."

In fact, the book refers to allegations in the criminal complaint stating that Hossain himself told an FBI informant that he was a member of Jamaat-e-Islami. The complaint provides these details: "In response to CI-1 talking about martyrs

(continued on page 22)

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Guantánamo Endgame

Authoritarian madness, strategic disaster, a national disgrace: the Bush Administration's Guantánamo experiment has been justly called all these things. Lately, it was condemned by five former Secretaries of State—Colin Powell, Madeleine Albright, Warren Christopher, James Baker and Henry Kissinger (a man whose own extravagant abuses of executive power suggest just how far beyond the pale Guantánamo really is)—as well as the nonpartisan American Bar Association, which expressed grave concern about the possibility of fair trials.

EDITORIAL

But a seedy, corrupt attempt at manipulating elections? That is the persuasive claim in the latest defense brief filed in the case of Salim Hamdan, Osama bin Laden's alleged driver. The evidence comes from Col. Morris Davis, whose conversion from chief prosecutor to chief whistleblower continues to shed a bright light on the tribunals. As defense lawyer Lt. Cmdr. Brian Mizer relates in his brief, Colonel Davis attended a meeting in September 2006—less than two months before the pivotal Congressional election—with Deputy Secretary of Defense Gordon England, a White House appointee, and William Haynes, Donald Rumsfeld's counsel. According to Davis, England's marching orders were clear: "We need to think about charging some of the high-value detainees because there could be strategic political value to charging some of these detainees before the election." Thus far, neither Haynes nor England has challenged the accuracy of Davis's testimony. White House control of the tribunals is incontrovertible: the tribunals are directed not by career officers but by Susan Crawford, a protégée of Dick Cheney.

Political interference at that level would lead to indictments in any other American courtroom. Yet while candidates McCain, Clinton and Obama have all made welcome broad-brush promises to shut down Guantánamo, the military commissions themselves have not been seriously questioned by candidates or Congress. They all cover their eyes and ears even as the Bush Administration rushes high-profile cases like Hamdan's to trial, hoping to get out in front of the presidential election. And ahead, too, of the crucial Supreme Court case argued in late March on the deprivation of habeas corpus rights of two American citizens held under US authority in Iraq, a separate but related reflection of this Administration's abusive overreach.

It has become painfully clear that the Administration's concern is to have not a credible, transparent trial of 9/11 conspirators but election-year convictions at any cost; the only "security" that officials hope to protect is their own freedom from embarrassment and accountability. In early April the Justice Department at last revealed former Office of Legal Counsel lawyer John Yoo's sweeping, previously classified 2003 memorandum declaring that the President's wartime power nullifies all laws and treaties against torture. That memo—which empowered the military to physically and psychologically torture detainees and suggested that interrogators would be immune from criminal prosecution—was rescinded for cosmetic purposes after nine months, but its underlying reasoning motivates the Bush Administration to this day. The Defense Department continues, in the face of a new lawsuit by the ACLU, to block release of unredacted recent testimony in which fourteen prisoners transferred to Guantánamo from "black sites" describe brutal treatment and torture.

This is the Guantánamo endgame: with the clock running down, George W. Bush and his team are trying to keep one step ahead of history and of criminal charges, as the full extent of their assault on the Constitution becomes known.

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NEWS & ANALYSIS

Robert Dreyfuss: Lessons from Basra

Mary Mapes: It's a scandal, all right

Aziz Huq on Geert Wilders's *Fitna*

VIDEO NATION

Ari Melber: YouTube for smart people

STUDENT NATION

Myanmar vigil at University of Chicago

NATION POLL

Will GOP-ers hop on the McCain Express?

RADIONATION

Laura Flanders interviews Bill McKibben, Jeff Faux, Victor Navasky and Chris Cerf

Shown Up by Sadr, Again

Rulers of Iraq usually overplay their hand.

Saddam Hussein did so when he invaded Kuwait in 1990, and George W. Bush did it when he announced he had won a complete military victory in 2003. Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki made the same mistake by launching a direct assault on Basra on March 25. He swore he would crush the militiamen who ruled the city, force them to hand over their weapons within seventy-two hours and make each gunman pledge to forswear violence.

COMMENT

Maliki was setting himself up for defeat. His attack was not directed against all militias but against the Mahdi Army of radical cleric Muqtada al-Sadr. Given Maliki's sweeping war aims, all the Mahdi Army had to do for the prime minister to be weakened was to survive. This was always likely to happen. The US Marines had failed to eliminate Sadr when they had him trapped in the Shiite holy city of Najaf in April, and again in August, 2004. So it was hardly probable that, four years on, some 15,000 Iraqi troops were going to be able to fight their way through the alleyways of the sprawling slums of Basra and Baghdad in the face of resistance from thousands of militiamen who welcome martyrdom.

Maliki's failure has been extraordinarily complete. He had gone down to Basra himself to oversee the operation, picturesquely named "Charge of the Knights," but everything went wrong from the beginning. The images Iraqis saw on their television screens were not of Mahdi Army members handing over weapons but of mutinying police units surrendering to the Mahdi Army and receiving an olive sprig and a Koran in return for their guns. According to US and British spokesmen, we were about to see the new Iraqi Army in action, but there were no indications that it was mounting an all-out assault on the parts of Basra controlled by the Mahdi Army. Five days into the battle Sadr's forces still held some three-quarters of the city.

It was not just Maliki's pretensions that were being unmasked. For the past six months the White House has been trumpeting the success of the "surge" and how, at long last, US military forces were on the road to success in Iraq. The networks ran happy stories of markets returning to life and of Sahwa, the Awakening Councils, driving out Al Qaeda in Iraq from Sunni areas and cooperating with the US Army. But as Maliki's offensive stalled, the real political landscape of Iraq was revealed. For all the claims of imaginary progress by the protagonists of the surge, half of Baghdad had always been covertly controlled by the Mahdi Army. A friend e-mailed me saying he had been walking past a well-known ice-cream shop called al-Ruwad in a shopping area in the mixed Mansur district when the Mahdi Army suddenly opened fire on the police from "several black four wheel drives with dark windows that are usually used by high government officials. They killed one policeman and wounded two others."

There were other ominous signs that the surge's success has been oversold by the White House and the Pentagon. Consider what happened to Tahseen Sheikhly, a Sunni who was frequently shown on Iraqi state television alongside US military and embassy officials touting the success of the security plan in Baghdad and surrounding areas. Soon after the Basra offensive had begun, a detachment of uniformed police commandos in thirteen police

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Noted.

THE PAULSON PLAN: The financial-reform plan announced by Treasury Secretary **Henry Paulson** is better understood as Wall Street's pitiful, lame-duck defense against genuine reform. The confusing bells and whistles do not conceal Paulson's real purpose: to blame the disaster on disorganized government regulators and do little or nothing to restore strong prudential regulation.

The media are making a big fuss, but Bush's ideas for reform are no more credible than **Herbert Hoover**'s promise of "a chicken in every pot." The real reform debate can't start until we have a new President and Congress. Meanwhile, Paulson, a son of **Goldman Sachs**, seeks to protect fellow club members with distracting proposals. Let the Federal Reserve become the "supercop" of Wall Street. That's a hoot. The Fed is a principal culprit—the bankers' friend—that looked the other way, then showered billions on the failing financiers. What's disturbing is that the Democrats seem disposed to go along. They will be sorry if they do. Putting the Federal Reserve in charge is not reform but surrender. WILLIAM GREIDER

BACHELET AND THE PILL: The **Chilean Constitutional Tribunal** is set to rule on a 2007 lawsuit brought by thirty-six conservative legislators to block President **Michelle Bachelet**'s decision to distribute emergency-contraception pills to women of all income levels. In a Catholic country where abortion is illegal, Bachelet's opponents have seized on the issue to undermine Chile's first female executive.

Three giant pharmacy chains—Salcobrand, Farmacias Ahumada and Cruz Verde—initially refused to carry the pill, incurring heavy fines from the government. Two eventually backed down (the third, Salcobrand, is led by a devout **Opus Dei** member), but not before launching a propaganda campaign against Bachelet and refusing to pay the fines. Anti-Bachelet municipal leaders sent back shipments of the pill that were to be distributed in public clinics, gaining much media attention for their defiance. And with a majority on the tribunal lined up against Bachelet, insiders predict it will ban the pill later this month.

If so, the decision will be another blow to poor women, who cannot afford to leave the country for abortions and must resort to the back-alley variety. It may also open up legal space to call into question Bachelet's other progressive reforms, including her insistence on gender parity in the government. Grandstanding social conservatives will have their way, the pharmacies will get away with disobeying the law and Chilean women will pay the price. ASHLEY STEINBERG

INDECENT IN INDIANA: Indiana doesn't want to be known for its porn, according to State Representative **Terry Goodin**. Goodin is the author of a new state law, signed March 19, that requires anyone selling a product that "appeals to the prurient interest in sex of minors" to pay a $250 fine and register with the Secretary of State. While Goodin's law is intended to stop new sex shops from popping up along highways and in strip malls, the vague wording grants much leeway in how the law can be enforced. Do art books and sex-ed manuals apply? **Henry Miller**? What about lingerie? Halloween costumes?

"This is just outrageous from our standpoint, and we believe it is a violation of the First Amendment," says Chris Finan of the **American Booksellers Foundation for Free Expression**, which plans to file a legal challenge with the New York–based Media Coalition and the Indiana ACLU. Goodin, for his part, says constitutional concerns are a lot of "hullabaloo about nothing." Free-speech advocates and prurient minors in Indiana no doubt disagree. SUSANNAH VILA

PENTAGON PLANE FOLLY: Controversy surrounds a $35 billion Pentagon contract for aerial refueling tankers, awarded February 29 to Northrop Grumman and the European Aeronautic Defense and Space Corporation (EADS). Rival **Boeing**, once favored for the contract, is pushing the Government Accountability Office to overturn the decision.

Opponents protest that the deal will outsource American jobs—or, as Frank Gaffney of the Boeing-tied **Center for Security Policy** put it, support "anti-American" (i.e., European) labor unions. But the EADS/Northrop Grumman team is building a plant in Mobile, Alabama, to assemble the new tanker, and Boeing has plenty of foreign suppliers that would have been tapped had it won the contract. The controversy has more to do with who gets the profits than who gets the jobs.

Besides, dirty dealing cost Boeing a no-bid contract in the first place. Company executive Michael Sears and Pentagon official Darleen Druyun both went to jail after Boeing lured her with a private-sector job while she was working on negotiations for the tanker deal. Boeing's criminal behavior opened the door for the EADS/Northrop Grumman bid.

Truth be told, neither company deserves the contract. The Pentagon's **Defense Science Board** and the **Rand Corporation** have found there is no compelling need for new tankers. Rather than arguing over where the jobs should be, someone in Congress needs to stand up and say that there are better uses for the $35 billion allocated for these unnecessary planes.

WILLIAM D. HARTUNG AND FRIDA BERRIGAN

BAGHDAD TO THE BORDER: Uncle Sam wants you: first to serve in the Army, then for a job with the Department of Homeland Security, courtesy of the US **Customs and Border Protection Agency**. The CBP has announced that it will expand its recruiting to military installations overseas, the latest step in the ongoing militarization of the country's borders. First stop was the **Kaiserlauten Military Community** in Germany, where, on March 26, recruiters urged American soldiers to consider a postmilitary career as a border guard.

The largest uniformed law enforcement agency in the United States, the CBP has doubled in size since 2004, to more than 48,000 employees; President Bush has pledged that it will surpass 50,000 by the end of the year. Veterans already make up one-quarter of the agency's workforce.

Why the good fit? The CBP refers to the military as a "fertile source for applicants," while an agency official cites a shared "commitment to security of the nation." Oh, yes—veterans are also "familiar with working outside." BRETT STORY

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vehicles (nicknamed Monicas by Iraqis because they supposedly resemble Monica Lewinsky) drew up outside Sheikhly's house in southeast Baghdad. They shot three of his guards dead, kidnapped him and burned down his house. The next that was heard of him was a phone call in which he said he was being well treated and asked the government to negotiate with the Sadrists. The kidnapping showed just how little the Iraqi government can depend on the loyalty of its army and police.

It was not Maliki alone who miscalculated the strength of Muqtada al-Sadr, the Sadrist movement and the Mahdi Army. This has been a recurrent theme in US policy since the fall of Saddam Hussein, with consistently disastrous results—though there is no sign that US officials have learned from their mistakes. I was in Baghdad in March and April 2004 when US envoy Paul Bremer closed down Sadr's paper, *al-Hawza*, denounced him as a "rabble-rousing cleric" and compared him to Hitler. Iraqi ministers were told to refer not to the Mahdi Army but to "Muqtada's militia." Ali Allawi, a highly intelligent Iraqi government minister, tried to explain to Bremer that Sadr was important because he represented the millions of poor Shiites whose lives had been ruined by Saddam's wars and because of the destruction of the Iraqi economy by UN sanctions. Bremer retorted that he "didn't care a damn about the underclass and what [the Sadrists] represented."

Within days of Bremer's action, most of southern Iraq and much of Shiite Baghdad had fallen to the Sadrists. US troops were sent to fight them as the Iraqi police went home. Sadr held out in Najaf until an agreement was reached. In August 2004 during the second siege of Najaf, the Mahdi Army suffered very heavy losses, but Sadr and his movement survived after the Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani brokered a compromise.

Now, four years later, the Iraqi government's decision to challenge the Sadrists has produced a military failure even more complete, illustrating the real distribution of political and military power in Iraq. A compromise was brokered by Iran, with senior Iraqi lawmakers traveling to the Iranian holy city of Qom to see Sadr, who is pursuing his religious studies there. Astonishingly, they also held talks with Brig. Gen. Qassem Suleimani, the commander of the Quds (Jerusalem) brigades of Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps, the organization denounced by Bush as the sinister hand behind much of the trouble in Iraq.

In a marvelous piece of mistiming and misjudgment, Roman Martinez and Dan Senor—who was Paul Bremer's spokesman during the disastrous confrontation with Sadr in 2004, an experience that apparently taught him nothing—published an op-ed in the *Wall Street Journal* on March 20 titled "Whatever Happened to Moqtada?" In words that were to be disproved within days of their publication, the authors explained the factors that "contributed to Sadr's marginalization" and asserted that "the full implementation of the surge helped weaken Sadr, not make him more popular." A week later Muqtada al-Sadr's forces had faced down the Iraqi Army and were in control of three-quarters of Basra and half of Baghdad. PATRICK COCKBURN

Patrick Cockburn's Muqtada: Muqtada al-Sadr, the Shia Revival, and the Struggle for Iraq *is out this month from Scribner.*

Calvin Trillin, Deadline Poet

On the Struggle For the Democratic Nomination

Top Democrats now want to shout,
"Oh Hillary, please just get out!"
But Hillary and Bill still say,
"Get out? Give up? Slink off? No way."

What's left? To wound Barack, thus drain
His numbers vis-à-vis McCain,
Then say, "He's eloquent and all,
But damaged. He can't win this fall."

Republicans seemed sunk before—
A grim economy, the war.
But now the Democrats make news:
They've figured out a way to lose.

Dems Flunking Trade 101

Barack Obama may have introduced America to the audacity of hope. But in the Democratic primary debate on the pivotal issue of trade policy, it is the audacity of Hillary Clinton that is remarkable. Obama has been troublingly tentative when it comes to articulating the smart progressive response to the challenges of globalization that the voters in the nation's industrial heartland await. Clinton has shown no such caution.

COMMENT

As she did before Ohio's March 4 primary, where blue-collar votes renewed her candidacy, the New York senator is campaigning in the next big-primary states as a fierce critic of failed trade deals. Incredibly, for a woman who has been caught inflating her populist credentials more than once this year, Clinton is moving way beyond the vague rhetoric about renegotiating the North American Free Trade Agreement that became a centerpiece of her Ohio campaigning. Borrowing pages from Ralph Nader, she's telling Pennsylvania and Indiana voters that America's national security is threatened by trade and investment policies that make the stability of the US economy "dependent upon decisions made in other countries' capitals." Clinton warns that the US trade deficit with China—which rose last year to a record $252 billion—has given Beijing too much financial leverage over us. And she's linking her "slow erosion of our own economic sovereignty" theme with a claim that she has opposed the free-trade regime since 1992—implicitly suggesting that workers who have been let down by other Democrats can count on her to battle Wall Street on behalf of Main Street.

Clinton's latest line rewrites her history. Shortly before

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her campaign began airing NAFTA-bashing television ads in Pennsylvania, the National Archives released 11,046 pages of previously classified documents of her tenure as First Lady. The smoking gun buried within contradicts Clinton's claim that "I have been a critic of NAFTA from the very beginning." The papers confirm that Clinton worked against labor, farm and environmental groups in 1993 to pass NAFTA—and in so doing initiated a new era in trade relations that would see the United States help form the World Trade Organization, pressure Africa and Latin America to open themselves to new forms of economic colonialism *and* remove restrictions on trade with China. Clinton participated in strategy sessions and headlined a closed-door rally that prepared 120 women business leaders to lobby Congress. Clinton aides claim she was secretly pushing back against the free-trade orthodoxy of her husband's administration, but those who heard her at the rally say that's "ludicrous."

"There was no question that everyone who spoke, including the First Lady, was for NAFTA," says Laura Jones, executive director of the US Association of Importers of Textiles and Apparel. This is not the only inconvenient trade truth for Clinton. After she capitalized in Ohio on reports that an Obama aide told Canadians not to take seriously the Illinois senator's criticisms of NAFTA, Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper's chief of staff was quoted in Canadian media saying that Canadians got similar assurances from the Clinton camp.

After so many stumbles, why is Clinton opening a discussion about the trade deficit with China, which ballooned after her husband's administration "normalized" trade relations with that country in 2000—a move Hillary Clinton openly supported, despite warnings that it would speed the exodus of US jobs and undermine the ability of Washington to pressure Beijing on human rights? It's a sly calculation. To win delegates from states like Pennsylvania and Indiana—which according to the Economic Policy Institute have lost, respectively, 78,200 and 45,200 jobs because of the US-China trade imbalance—Clinton must establish herself as a credible critic of free trade. And she is betting that reporters who rarely cover trade issues seriously won't press her on her past positions.

For the most part, Obama has let her get away with it. The Obama camp has criticized Clinton a bit for gaming the trade debate, but its critique has been unfocused. And it has not connected with blocs of white working-class voters in an arc of states worried about trade—Pennsylvania, Indiana, West Virginia and Kentucky—that hold primaries in April and May. In fairness, Obama has been preoccupied with discussions of race forced to the forefront by media absorption with his former pastor's sermons. But there is, as well, a sense that his caution may have something to do with his ambivalence about siding too closely with labor, farm, environmental and human rights groups in the trade debate. Like Clinton, Obama backed the recent Peru Free Trade Agreement, and his "movement" on globalization issues has seemed to be influenced more by presidential ambition than the commitment to workers here and abroad that motivates fair-trade crusaders like Ohio Senator Sherrod Brown and Maine Congressman Mike Michaud—neither of whom has endorsed anyone in the presidential race. Skepticism about both Obama and Clinton has so far prevented two key unions, the United Auto Workers and the United Steelworkers, from providing either Democratic contender with an endorsement that could influence industrial-state primaries.

The trade debate is a challenge for Obama. For all Clinton's talk, her record of past support for free trade with China makes her vulnerable in Pennsylvania and Indiana. But to exploit that vulnerability, Obama must be more than a critic of Clinton or even NAFTA. Obama must inspire confidence that he "gets" Sherrod Brown's point that the problem is not NAFTA; it's "the NAFTA model" for trade pacts—a point Brown and Michaud plan to make this month with timely legislation that challenges US support of "race to the bottom" trade policies that encourage corporations to move jobs in search of ever lower standards for protecting workers, consumers and the environment. "It's not just NAFTA. The entire trade regime doesn't work," says Steelworkers president Leo Gerard. "We're waiting to hear more details from the remaining Democratic candidates on what they're going to do about China, revitalizing American manufacturing and their trade positions before we do any final endorsement." While Obama practices caution and the unions wait, Clinton is mounting an opportunistic campaign that plays off displaced workers' desperation for a champion—even one whose credibility is undermined by her record. JOHN NICHOLS

Comix Nation

ROBERT GROSSMAN

On the Web

Karen Houppert reports on a new case of alleged rape involving Iraq contractor KBR. A 42-year-old woman who works for a KBR affiliate says she was raped by another KBR worker and a US soldier—and then discouraged from reporting the incident. The episode, and the alleged victim's lack of legal recourse, highlights the climate of impunity among contractors in Iraq.

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Katha Pollitt

Blowing Smoke

I read Nicholson Baker's *Human Smoke: The Beginnings of World War II, the End of Civilization* in galleys, obsessively, for hours at a stretch, in the beautiful northern Italian town of Pavia. Pear trees and plum trees were blossoming. The old university buildings glowed palely in the springtime sun. By the time I finished the book I felt something I had never felt before: fury at pacifists.

This was surely not what Baker had in mind. He dedicates *Human Smoke* to "American and British pacifists" who "tried to save Jewish refugees, feed Europe, reconcile the United States and Japan, and stop the war from happening." If everything you knew about World War II came out of this book, you might well agree with Baker: "They failed, but they were right" (the galleys, but not the published book, continue: "Winston Churchill, I'm sorry to say, was wrong"). Baker builds his case against the "good war" in a 471-page collage of scraps and snippets drawn mostly from contemporary accounts—newspaper reports, letters, diaries, memoirs. You watch the war unfold all over the world, as if in real time. Here are the bullies, intent on blood and glory: Hitler, of course; Churchill, delighting in bombing German cities; Roosevelt, refusing to support a bill to admit 20,000 Jewish children as refugees while secretly laying plans to join the war despite his campaign promise to stay out. And over here is a small, valiant cast of people who rejected jingoism, hatred and violence: Clarence Pickett of the American Friends Service Committee; Jeannette Rankin, who cast the lone vote in Congress against both world wars; Muriel Lester and other aid workers, who struggled unsuccessfully against the British ban on food shipments to feed the refugees of Europe; writers and diarists like Christopher Isherwood, Mihail Sebastian and Victor Klemperer. The antiwar conviction of these humane individuals is so vivid and so passionate you start to feel that it all could have turned out differently, *if only*. But is that true?

In its length and bagginess, *Human Smoke* feels different from Baker's novels, which are obsessive claustrophobic miniatures: two disembodied strangers talk on the phone about sex (*Vox*); one friend tries to dissuade another from assassinating the President (*Checkpoint*). But really his method is the same: Baker forces you to share his tunnel vision by rigidly excluding what doesn't fit and by giving everything he includes more or less equal weight. Thus, Hitler is an anti-Semite, and so is Roosevelt—one would go on to exterminate 6 million Jews, and the other thought there were too many Jews at Harvard. If you are naïve enough to believe that the United States went to war to save the Jews, *Human Smoke* will disabuse you. But the reader who is surprised to learn that neither Roosevelt nor Churchill did a thing to prevent the Holocaust is unlikely to know enough to question Baker's slanted version of other events.

For example, Baker insinuates that Roosevelt intentionally frightened Japan into bombing Pearl Harbor by putting the Navy there and by sending bombers to Chiang Kai-shek. In his version, China is the aggressor—never mind that Japan had occupied Manchuria since 1931 and savagely invaded China in 1937. Similarly, Baker cites numerous anecdotes to demonstrate the lack of anti-Semitic fervor among ordinary Germans throughout the 1930s. Fine, but that important point is then made to suggest a general lack of enthusiasm for Nazism and its dreams of German supremacy; you'd think the only Germans who adored Hitler were hard-core party thugs. In fact, Hitler was extremely popular throughout the period covered by Baker and remained so as long as the war was going well. Few Germans were interested in the passive resistance Gandhi urged on them (he gave the same advice to the Jews—stay and die). The Gestapo would have been happy to murder any who tried it, as it did other enemies of the state.

Baker's cut-and-paste method suggests without stating outright, much less making a coherent argument. Thus, he never exactly says that lives would have been spared had Churchill made a separate peace and Roosevelt stayed out of the war. But that is the implication. He allows the reader to imagine that the Nazis were serious about settling the Jews in Madagascar and came up with the Final Solution only when war made that plan impossible—so the Allies were, in a way, responsible for Auschwitz. He doesn't mention that Madagascar was supposed to be a slow-motion death camp ruled by the SS, nor does he note the Nazis' plans to murder and enslave millions of Slavs once the Jews had been disposed of. It is not so clear, in other words, that fewer people would have died had Britain and the United States let Germany take over Europe. Moreover, why trust Hitler to abide by a nonaggression treaty? The Hitler-Stalin pact didn't keep him from attacking the Soviet Union.

Baker says he relied on newspapers and other contemporaneous accounts because of their immediacy and freshness, the sense of the present as offering a range of possible outcomes. Fair enough, but you wouldn't necessarily go to them for perspective or truth, as anyone who has ever read about themselves in the paper knows all too well. The present seems open-ended not just because those living in it don't know what's going to happen next but also because they don't know much about what's really going on at that very moment. It wasn't obvious to the good kind Rufus Jones that it was futile for him and his group of Quakers to beg Nazis to let them relieve the suffering of refugees and Jews—"We noted a softening effect on their faces," he wrote later of the unspeakable gangsters who read their request. But that doesn't mean there was ever a chance that he might have succeeded. It just means he didn't grasp what he was up against. Say what you will about Churchill and Roosevelt, at least they got that right. ■

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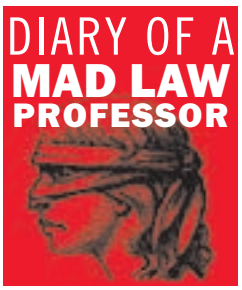
Patricia J. Williams

Where Credit Is Due

Recently, a number of colleges and universities, including Harvard, Princeton and Stanford, have instituted significant tuition relief for lower- and middle-income students. The impetus for this move has less to do with generosity than with a 2006 report by Margaret Spellings's Education Department. The document, *A Test of Leadership: Charting the Future of U.S. Higher Education*, cites concern that upwardly spiraling education costs have threatened the social mobility at the core of American identity. Subsequent legislative proposals have suggested that schools reinvest 5 percent of their endowment in student needs. Since the report also ties accreditation to this expenditure, there has been a flurry of reconsidered financial aid options, from significantly reduced cost to free tuition. This is mostly to the good, although the degree to which this requirement disproportionately affects poorer rather than richer schools remains contentious.



The Spellings report, however, contains other, less salutary recommendations, which could have major implications for all higher education curriculums, from community colleges to graduate institutions. The troubling parts center on the deployment of a hyper-econometric model by which learning itself would be measured. Here's the report's bottom line: "American higher education has become what, in the business world, would be called a mature enterprise: increasingly risk-averse, at times self-satisfied, and unduly expensive…. History is littered with examples of industries that…failed to respond to—or even to notice—changes in the world around them, from railroads to steel manufacturers. Without serious self-examination and reform, institutions of higher education risk falling into the same trap, seeing their market share substantially reduced and their services increasingly characterized by obsolescence." How, one wonders, might the teaching of odes or the exploration of Kant be correlated with the marketability of railroads and steel? Let me count the ways.

First, the report relies on a cost-benefit, "money in, money out" bottom line that would require a system of tracking student performance from pre-K through college and graduate school. While basic reading and math skills can arguably be measured in relatively cut-and-dried ways, the complex nature and increasing interdisciplinarity of higher education makes such measurement a daunting proposition. The Spellings report ignores this with a breathtakingly oversimplified metric: "Student achievement, which is inextricably connected to institutional success, must be measured by institutions on a 'value-added' basis that takes into account students' academic baseline when assessing their results." Crudely put, students would have to be evaluated like a balance sheet. Take the value of what they came in with, then take the value of what they know when they get out. Subtract the former from the latter. The difference is what's known in the world of soybean futures as "value added."

If that weren't weird enough, "This information should be made available to students, and reported publicly in aggregate form to provide consumers and policymakers an accessible, understandable way to measure the relative effectiveness of different colleges and universities." In other words, the results of tests measuring "value-added" performance would be used to grade each school. Ostensibly, a school's grade would be used like the nutrient labels on tubs of potato salad. This system would then assist "consumers" as they bargain-hunt for the very best deal.

Likewise, the "relative effectiveness" of institutions would be measured by only two identified standards: efficiency and accountability. These two measures would apply not merely to financial affairs but to what an efficient steel magnate might call "the delivery" of "the product" in question—in this case, all forms of knowledge.

This new regime can mean all kinds of things, but here's what schools are worried about: standardized tests issued to all freshmen and seniors. Increasingly standardized textbooks and curriculums. Death to liberal arts—how do you measure "efficient" growth via a poetry seminar? Death to fields of study like dance, drama, music, women's or ethnic studies. Fear that universities will be subject to the kind of unhelpful measurements that many elementary schools face because of No Child Left Behind—schools with higher performing students or more creative curriculums unable to show the "required percentage of improvement" graded lower than schools where teaching is unimaginative but easily marked. Or schools with children from traumatized neighborhoods or with few English speakers being "failed" because they aren't progressing at the formulaic rate.

One of the most influential proponents of this corporatized model is Seventh Circuit Judge Richard Posner. Here's Posner on his blog: "The contribution of nonscientific fields to welfare is not negligible, but one does have a sense that in many of them the marginal product is slight or even negative—is there really social value in having 400 English-language philosophy journals…rather than 50?" Posner also worries that too many women are admitted to professional schools, because they are not as "productive" as men in their long-term careers: "The fact that a significant percentage of places in the best professional schools are being occupied by individuals who are not going to obtain the maximum possible value from such an education is troubling from an overall economic standpoint." Therefore, "the gender-neutral policies that govern admission to the elite professional schools illustrate discrimination in favor of women. Were admission to such schools based on a prediction of the social value of the education offered, fewer women would be admitted." Framing education as a "profit-maximizing" "industry" does more than just push women and bards back in the box. It takes aim at the joy, play and very love of lifelong learning as irrelevant externalities to be eliminated for their irrational, trade-penalizing transaction costs. ■

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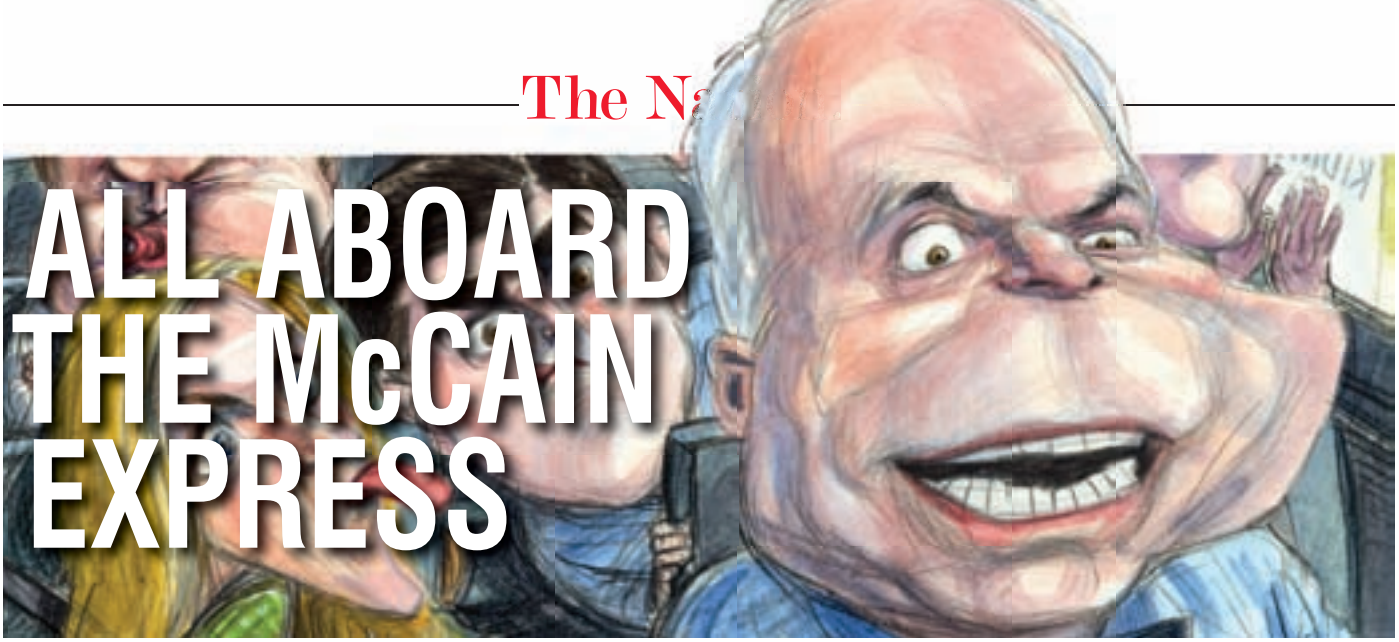

ALL ABOARD THE McCAIN EXPRESS

After months of tarring John McCain as a closet Democrat, the conservative noise machine is coming around to support him—if it can keep its stories straight.

by RICK PERLSTEIN

Back when the Republican presidential race was still competitive, the insults against John McCain from leading conservative voices were so extravagant they almost constituted a new literary genre. Rush Limbaugh said McCain threatened "the American way of life as we've always known it." McCain's Senate colleague Thad Cochran said, "The thought of him as President sends a cold chill down my spine." Ann Coulter charged the most unforgivable sin of all: McCain was, in fact, "a Democrat." Coulter's employer, Fox News, seconded the smear on February 7 by printing the words "John McCain (D-AZ)" under footage of the Arizona Republican.

That day was no ordinary one in the history of McCain-hate. On that afternoon, most of these figures' preferred candidate, Mitt Romney, announced at CPAC, the big annual conservative conference in Washington, that he was dropping out of the race. McCain, now the presumptive Republican nominee, was booed. The next morning the conservative magazine *Human Events* sent out a weekly roundup of its top ten stories to its e-mail list. Eight were anti-McCain jeremiads. One called the McCain ascendancy "the new Axis of Evil." Michael Reagan's article "John McCain Hates Me" posited a "huge gap that separates McCain—whose contempt for his fellow humans is patently obvious—and my dad, Ronald Reagan," and concluded, "He has contempt for conservatives who he thinks can be duped into thinking he's one of them."

Michael Reagan, for one, would not be duped. He would not defile his father's sacred memory. At least for a week. Eight days later Reagan's article for *Human Events* argued, "Assuming that John McCain will be the Republican nominee, you can bet my father would be itching to get out on the campaign trail working to elect him even if he disagreed with him on a number of issues."

Such are the strange McCain contortions Republicans have been forcing themselves into in recent weeks. Tom DeLay used to fret that he "might have to sit this one out" if McCain won the nomination. Now he's stumping for the presumptive nominee with apparent enthusiasm. At a March 1 "Reagan Day" dinner (Republicans used to call them "Lincoln Day" dinners), Texas Senator John Cornyn likened the base's swing to McCain to the grieving process: "You come to acceptance."

But what is it that made supporting a senator who has earned an 83 lifetime rating from the American Conservative Union and votes with his party 88.3 percent of the time feel like mourning in the first place? They weren't this hard, after all, on fair-weather conservatives Bob Dole in 1996 or George H.W. Bush in 1988 and 1992, were they?

Conservatism is, among many other things, a culture. The most important glue binding it together is a shared sense of cultural grievance—the conviction, uniting conservatives high and low, theocratic and plutocratic, neocon and paleocon, that someone, somewhere is looking down their noses at them with a condescending sneer. And to conservatives, McCain has been too often one of the sneerers. It is, as much as anything else, a question of *affect*. As Michael Reagan wrote, "I don't like the way he treats people. You get the impression that he thinks everybody is beneath him."

They are not entirely imagining things. Birds fly, fish swim, McCain preens: it has ever been thus. His preening has turned the thin-skinned crypt-keepers of conservatism hysterical. "McCain's apostasies," Charles Krauthammer recently wrote in the *Washington Post*, "are too numerous to count." They aren't, really. Some conservatives still call the Republican nominee "Juan" McCain, for what Reagan calls "such blatantly anti-conservative actions as his support for amnesty for illegal immigrants." But of course Reagan's sainted father, in signing the 1986 immigration bill, was a more unapologetic and effective advocate of "amnesty" than McCain ever was—and you don't hear him getting labeled "Ronaldo" Reagan. Note, also, that other supposed bugaboo of conservative ideology: pork-barrel government spending. McCain is the Senate's leading fighter against spending earmarks. If pork was what they truly cared about, he'd be a hero. But that stance has earned him no points on the "conservative" side of the ledger.

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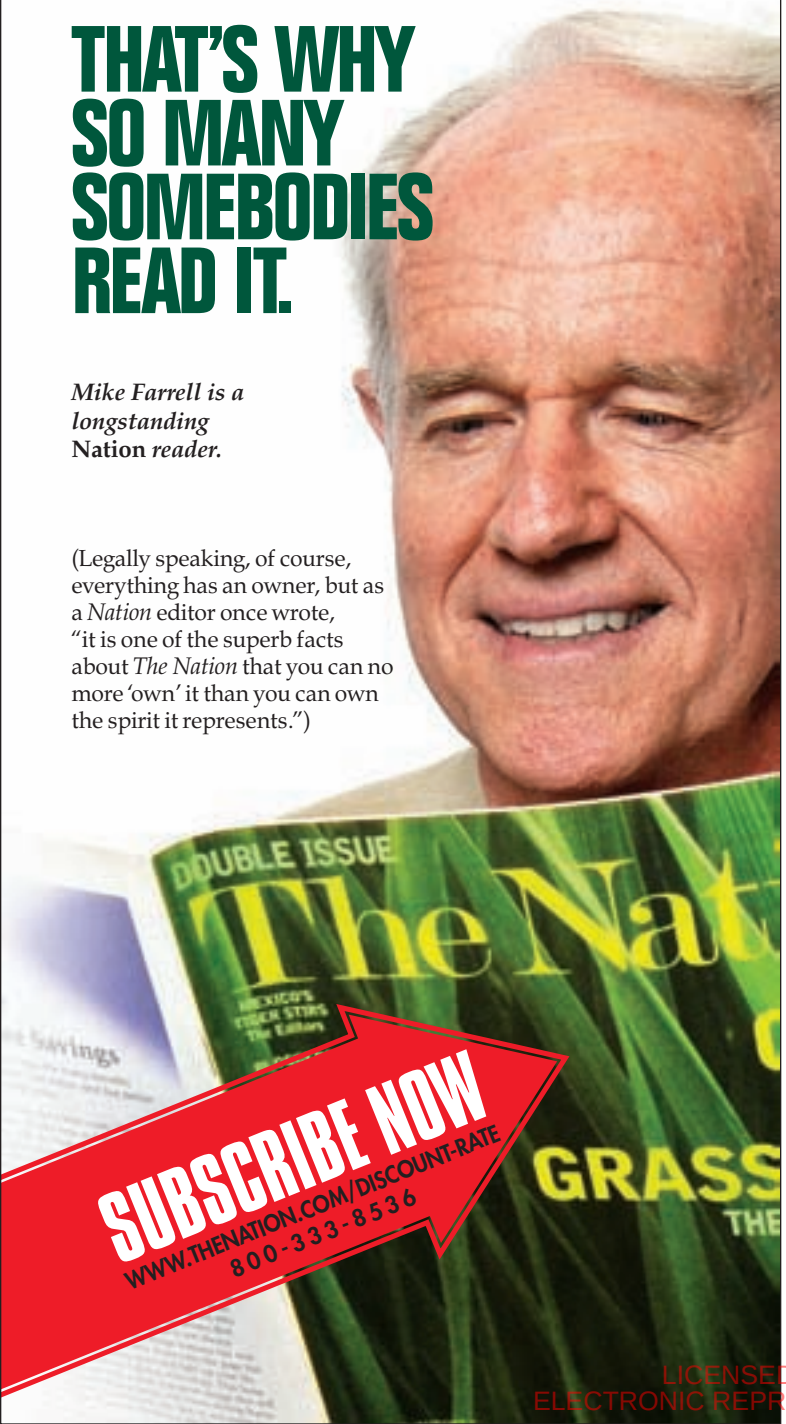

The issues aren't the issue. George Stephanopoulos once asked Tom DeLay what it was conservatives demanded of McCain, and DeLay admitted as much: "I don't think they're demanding that he change in his position," he said. "It is attitude."

In other words: it's the ring-kissing, stupid. Consider George H.W. Bush's attitude: he all but groveled before conservatives—first calling supply-side doctrine "voodoo economics," then swallowing hard and accepting a spot as voodoo priest Reagan's running mate. Bob Dole, formerly a proud budget balancer, lay prostrate before them in accepting a 15 percent across-the-board tax cut as the cornerstone of his 1996 presidential platform, then took on movement hero Jack Kemp as his running mate.

For conservative leaders, making candidates pay them court, publicly and ostentatiously, is a colossal source of their symbolic power before their followers. It's kabuki theater, mostly. Ronald Reagan never did much to make abortion illegal. He did, however, deliver videotaped greetings, fulsome in praise for his hosts, to antiabortion rallies on the Mall. Pentecostal leaders were horrified to see George W. Bush violate what they considered biblical prophesy by giving over the Gaza Strip to the Palestinians in 2004. After they made their dismay known, Bush did not change his mind. He did, however, send top White House and National Security Council staffers to flatter them in a private meeting that concluded, according to an account one of the pastors sent to his followers, "with a heart-moving send-off of the President in his Presidential helicopter." Rings kissed, egos assuaged—and these particular Pentecostals stopped complaining about the sacrilege. The issue wasn't the issue.

For decades, the operative theory in Republican politics has been that there exists a seething mass of lockstep conservative voters controlled by leaders like these, without whose support no Republican can win a presidential election. Michael Reagan puts it this way: "If [McCain] gets the nomination the only way he could win against Hillary or Barack Obama would be to be part of a McCain-Limbaugh ticket." But that's certainly never been reflected in any actual electoral data. Indeed, this year it appears that conservative opinion leaders are more out of touch with the masses they purport to lead than ever. According to a recent CBS poll, only 17 percent of Republicans want an uncompromising conservative as their nominee. Eighty percent of Republicans are satisfied with McCain. Sixty percent of conservative primary voters say they "want a candidate who would compromise with Democrats in order to get things done."

McCain has called their bluff. He didn't suck up to Rush Limbaugh but won the nomination anyway; he's also faring well in general election matchups. He has shown that the kingmakers have no clothes. The humiliation is hard to forgive. It has made it harder for conservative leaders to do business and turned politicians like McCain (and Arnold Schwarzenegger), in their eyes, into monsters. On Glenn Beck's CNN show, for instance, Democratic consultant Peter

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Rick Perlstein, a senior fellow at the Campaign for America's Future, is the author of the forthcoming Nixonland: The Rise of a President and the Fracturing of America.

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Fenn pointed out that the reason McCain does well with voters is that "they think he is independent."

"Yes," Beck replied, "well, so is Dr. Frankenstein."

Kind of gives the game away: in their mind, these conservative leaders create Republican Presidents. But what's the point if GOP candidates are just going to go crashing around the countryside doing whatever the hell they want?

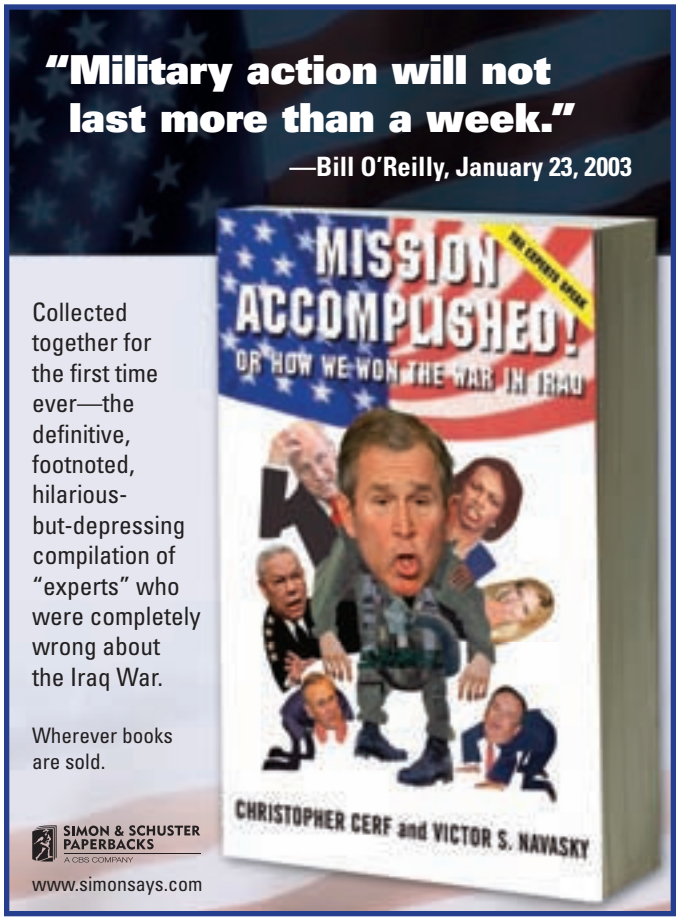
And so the professional conservatives did their best to set loose the torch-bearing mob. Late in January, former Pennsylvania Senator Rick Santorum made call after call after call spreading the word that, yes, even a President Hillary Clinton or a President Barack Obama would be better than a President McCain. At one point, according to Democratic activist Mike Lux, who overheard an indiscreet Santorum making such calls on the New York-DC Metroliner, Santorum attempted to talk an interlocutor into "coming out with a terrible story about McCain from five or six years ago." Clearly the crusade to sabotage McCain didn't work. Professional conservative Monica Crowley finally admitted the obvious: "A lot of people have actually voted for McCain, and they weren't just moderates and independents. Enough Republicans have voted for him to give him the nomination—and yes, a decent number of conservatives have too."

The frustration has been palpable. There was, for instance, the incident with radio host Bill Cunningham. Cunningham had warmed up a partisan crowd before a McCain speech in Cincinnati by barking out Obama's infamous middle name, Hussein. When McCain later "learned" about the remark, he pronounced himself shocked, shocked—and said he'd never met Cunningham in his life. Republicans have been choreographing such stylized minuets for so long now—the "grassroots conservative" gets the smears "out there," the "establishment" candidate distances himself from them, everyone emerges all the stronger—that the steps have become implicit. But Cunningham pretended to have forgotten the dance. He went on TV and complained that, of course he had met McCain several times before, and that of course McCain's handlers had told him to throw the crowd "red meat."

But everyone couldn't abandon McCain. If the Democrats won the presidency, after all, the country would see, as *Human Events*'s Bret Winterble warned, "Obama socializing entire corporate sectors." Republicans were stuck with McCain. So what would happen next?

Conservatives started to pivot publicly in the middle of February. It may have had something to do with reports that McCain gave in to what Robert Novak identified as the negotiating terms of "elements of the Republican Party's right wing": "first, that McCain would veto any tax increase passed by a Democratic Congress; second, that he would not emulate Gerald Ford and George H.W. Bush in naming liberal Supreme Court Justices such as John Paul Stevens and David Souter." It may also have something to do with McCain's bowing down before the conservative holy grail of super-harsh enforcement-first immigration reform.

Or, if my theory is correct, the conservative turnabout may have less to do with any particular policy pledges than with an ostentatious shift in apparent attitude: a show of groveling before the professional conservatives. "I've listened and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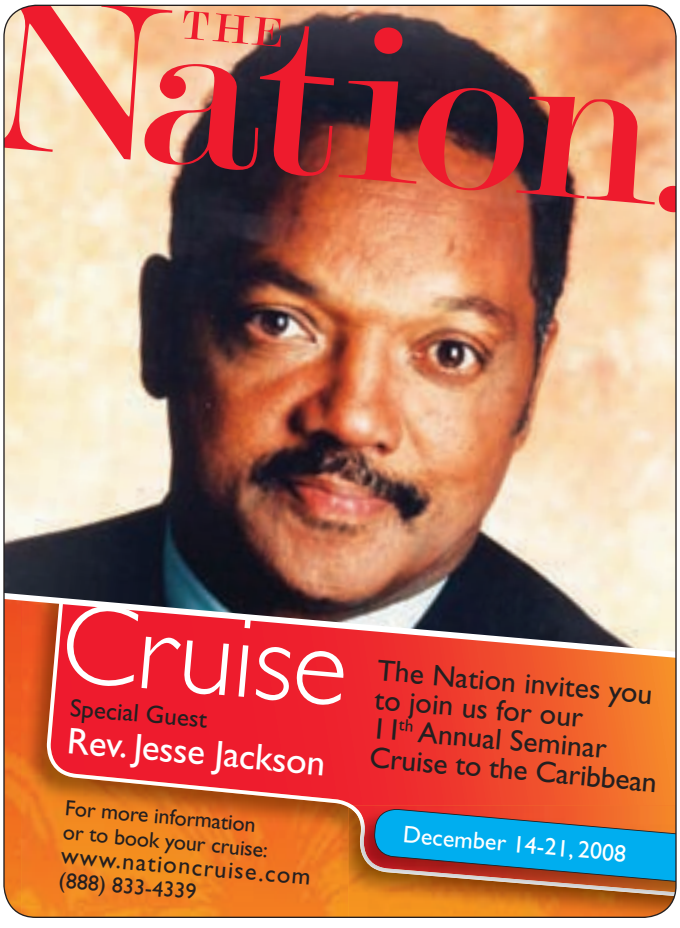
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learned," ran McCain's Super Tuesday radio ads announcing he'd seen the light on immigration: "No one will be rewarded for illegal behavior." Note the language. "Listening" is precisely the word the angriest professional conservatives use most when describing McCain's attitude problem. "He promises to hear, not to listen," *Human Events* editor Jed Babbin complained. "I am appalled by his contempt for the intelligence of his listeners," Michael Reagan moaned in his column.

We may never know how these meetings went down. Something, however, seems to have shifted in those days following CPAC. Jack Kemp, the man who was made Bob Dole's 1996 running mate as a sop to conservatives, penned an open letter to right-wing talk-radio on February 11, arguing that for conservatives to sit petulantly on their hands this fall would turn over the nation to "those who would weaken our nation's defense, wave a white flag to al-Qaida, socialize our health-care system, and promote income redistribution and class warfare instead of economic growth and equality of opportunity." He even, rather comically, compared McCain to another "well-known maverick" conservatives once foolishly turned against: Winston Churchill. "He was even banned from talk radio (aka the BBC) in those days," Kemp wrote.

Then, fortuitously, in the third week of February, just as the floodgates for McCain's redemption were opening, came an exposé of his alleged favors to an attractive blond lobbyist—from dreaded bête noire of conservatives, the *New York Times*. That offered the fig leaf to erstwhile McCain-haters who wished to make the pivot to party loyalty and still save face. It was no accident, they claimed, that it had been the people Jed Babbin called in another context "the hyperliberal editors of the *New York Times*" who had engineered the man's downfall. "The *New York Times* is trying to Swift Boat McCain," trumpeted one Republican strategist. "This is the first real salvo of the general election." An RNC letter sent, among other places, to the *Human Events* e-mail list blared, "The *New York Times* has proven once again that the liberal mainstream media will do whatever it takes to put Senator Hillary Clinton or Barack Obama in the White House." MAC-LASH: TIMES SLIME BOO$TS MCCAIN, declared the *New York Post* headline on a story of the fundraising blip that ensued.

To which a citizen of the reality-based community might reasonably ask: why would the editors at the *Times*—a paper that hired McCain's most consistent and aggressive backer in the conservative opinion firmament, Bill Kristol, as a columnist—"Swiftboat" a candidate they had endorsed for the Republican nomination?

How naïve you are. "The media picked the GOP's candidate," explained Rush Limbaugh, "and is now, with utter predictability, trying to destroy him." Shock-talker Laura Ingraham helpfully elaborated: "You wait until it's pretty much beyond a doubt that he's going to be the Republican nominee, and then you let it drop." The *Times* conspiracy was so immense and manifestly evil that even McCain's sworn rival, Mike Huckabee, found it in his heart to denounce it.

So the right is finally rowing more or less in the same direction, right? Not so fast. Newsmax.com on the day of CPAC, approvingly quoting Limbaugh, added to the anti-McCain thunder this way: "We are sick and tired of how the people who seem to be triumphing in our party are precisely the people who seem to be selling this party out in terms of its ideology." Four days later, McCain's nomination guaranteed, Newsmax, whose e-mail list of millions of names makes it much more influential than elite outlets like *National Review* or *The Weekly Standard*, attempted an awkward 180-degree twist. It quoted the testimony of a left-wing British writer, Jonathan Hari—identified as an "editorial board member of The Liberal magazine," so he must be speaking for Liberal Central Command—saying that McCain's "credentials as a 'bipartisan progressive' are in fact a 'lazy, hazy myth'.... 'The truth is that McCain is the candidate we should most fear.'"

See? The liberals hate him. So it's safe for us to like him.

But conservatism, like I say, is a business. You know you never get an e-mail from Newsmax editors without them trying to sell you something. What they were selling this time was a previous issue of their magazine with a McCain story on the cover. The piece was called "Inside McCain's Head," and it retold the far right's favorite former story about the man: that he's a Manchurian candidate whose true loyalties ultimately belong to the enemy. Newsmax hadn't even bothered to change the advertising copy now that former foe was friend: "In this eye-opening report on McCain Newsmax magazine delves into: How McCain charmed Manhattan's media elites with an exclusive fete that pundits say 'launched' his 2008 campaign for the White House.... "Why Paul Weyrich thinks McCain isn't the right man for the White House.... "McCain's 14-hour stints at the Las Vegas craps tables."

The *Times* exposé of McCain's alleged favors to an attractive blond lobbyist offered the fig leaf to McCain-haters looking to pivot and save face.

We like to think of the American right as a finely honed mechanism—a "conservative noise machine." And most times over the previous decade, the metaphor worked. But these days, the movement can no longer keep its stories straight. It reminds me of the McCain website the day after the *New York Times* lobbying exposé, the same day the RNC sent out its fundraising letter accusing the *Times* of electioneering for the Democrats. To anyone who might doubt that the good old conservative machine is overheating from the confusion and strain, here is proof that the noisemakers had clearly neglected to coordinate their anti-*Times* fundraising push with the McCain campaign. For there was the *Times* endorsement on its website that same day, bold as brass.

The gears of the contraption are jamming. Let the contortions of a Michael Reagan or a Newsmax attest to that, if nothing else. The whole machine had always been built on a series of bluffs: that once the malign hand of the liberals was removed from the executive, legislative and judicial branches,

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Internists Endorse Legal Access to Medical Marijuana

The American College of Physicians, the nation's largest organization of Internists, is calling for protection of both doctors and patients from criminal and civil penalties in states that have adopted medical-marijuana laws.

A position paper just released by their board of regents lists half a dozen diseases for which marijuana has already proven effective and they say the federal government must stop blocking promising research into this beneficial drug.*

"Evidence not only supports the use of medical marijuana in certain conditions but also suggests numerous indications for cannabinoids... The science on medical marijuana should not be obscured or hindered by the debate surrounding the legalization of marijuana for general use."

The College of Physicians now joins the ground swell of medical groups that fully or partially support research and access.

Score Card

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Institute of Medicine	
Leukemia & Lymphoma Society	
American Academy of Addiction Psychiatry	
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* For the full report go to: www.mpp.org/acp or www.acponline.org/acp_news/medmarinews.htm

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our new conservative Jerusalem would be achieved. But something remarkable occurred in the five years between 2001 and 2006: for the first time since the rise of the modern conservative movement with the nomination of Barry Goldwater in 1964, then the rise of Newt Gingrich's revolutionaries in 1994, the right had a chance to control all three branches of government—to actually run the country. Naught but obvious failures have been the result: a crashing economy, a rotting infrastructure, a failed war and a less safe world, more Americans saying their nation is on the wrong track than at any time since pollsters started measuring.

In the face of all this, the conservative movement has kept on trying to do the only thing it knows how to do: sell conservatism. Saner heads in the Republican Party, meanwhile, have done their darnedest to put forward a presidential prospect who might let the party distance itself, if only rhetorically, from the disaster that conservatism in power has proved to be.

But without "conservatism" as the core narrative, the Republican Party doesn't know how to tell any stories at all. Its confusion over how to talk about McCain is only the symptom. The conservative era is over—if you want it. ■

Chalabi's Lobby

The Iraqi exile worked with BKSH to make a business of Iraq, on the US government's tab.

by ARAM ROSTON

With the invasion of Iraq still three years in the future, Ahmad Chalabi would step into the lobby of the modern granite office building at 1801 K Street in Washington—the heart of the nation's lobbying corridor. He would walk past the security guard and ride the elevator up to the ninth floor. The ride was, in some sense, one small vertical leg of Chalabi's journey back to Iraq. This particular way point was the office belonging to Black, Kelly, Scruggs & Healey (BKSH), one of the most powerful lobbying firms in the United States, owned by public relations powerhouse Burson-Marsteller.

REUTERS/ATEF HASSAN

No one could have guessed, back in 2000, what would come of Chalabi's efforts in Washington. Few people knew who "neoconservatives" were, and even those who did could not have grasped their remarkable affection for and loyalty to Chalabi, a shrewd Iraqi Arab from a family of Shiite bankers. No one could have predicted that Chalabi's group, the Iraqi National Congress (INC), would go on to push false stories about terror and weapons of mass destruction with such great success as the group campaigned against Saddam Hussein's quite sadistic regime. Nor, certainly, was it possible to foresee that the massive propaganda campaign run by Chalabi to encourage the United States to invade Iraq would be fully paid for with US taxpayer funds.

One thing people did know, even in 2000, was that Ahmad Chalabi, whose thickly accented English seemed only to enhance his charisma, had lots and lots of friends on Capitol Hill. Congress had passed the Iraq Liberation Act in 1998, written largely to achieve Chalabi's vision for toppling Saddam. And every year Congress was earmarking money for him. But he had opponents, too, in the government: American diplomats who were skeptical of him, despite his charm and his claims of inside knowledge about Iraq. These Americans knew all about his murky past: a bank embezzlement conviction in absentia in the Kingdom of Jordan years earlier. They knew that the Central Intelligence Agency considered him a phony and a liability and, after working with him for years, had cut all ties with him.

So it is important, when considering Chalabi's relationship with BKSH, to ponder that this elite firm was hired in part as a result of a feud in the American government. It was in the late 1990s, when Congress was earmarking funds for Chalabi's INC and charging the State Department with spending all the cash, that State enlisted BKSH's services. The State Department diplomats, under veteran Frank Ricciardone, were among the skeptics on the subject of Ahmad Chalabi and were concerned about the accounting challenges posed by their obligation to dole out the earmarked funds. They figured that through BKSH, they could funnel support to the INC while complying with Congressional intentions and normal accounting procedures, and moreover that an American firm could be controlled and monitored and would have the expertise in PR and organizing that was necessary. They put a contract out for bid; PR giant Burson-Marsteller won the award and quickly handed the work over to its subsidiary BKSH.

BKSH was the lobbying vehicle of the legendary Republican insider Charles Black Jr., one of "America's foremost Republican political strategists," according to BKSH. Black, a former adviser to Presidents Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush, is now a senior adviser to GOP presidential candidate John McCain, who was himself an early Chalabi backer with ties to the Iraqi

Aram Roston is an Emmy Award–winning investigative producer at NBC News and the author of the newly published The Man Who Pushed America to War: The Extraordinary Life, Adventures, and Obsessions of Ahmad Chalabi *(Nation Books), from which this article is adapted.*

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going all the way back to 1991. BKSH, which represented major defense contractors, governments and international corporations, was perfectly situated to leverage its expertise on behalf of the Iraqi National Congress.

In an interview, Charles Black explained that his firm received $200,000 to $300,000 per year from the US government "to promote the INC." Black, in his pleasant Texas drawl, says the firm did "standard kinds of public relations and public affairs, setting up seminars, helping them get speeches covered by the press, press conferences." Black said he believes his company can take a lot of pride in a strong campaign. "The whole thing was very successful. The INC became not only well-known, but I think the message got out there strongly."

Most of BKSH's work for Chalabi was handled by Riva Levinson, a longtime Capitol Hill lobbyist who quickly became passionate about Chalabi's cause. "Riva would spend her weekend thinking about, How can I get press coverage for the INC next week?" Black explained, "and then come in on Monday morning and schedule a speech or call reporters to get a speech covered or get Chalabi or the other leaders out to get the message out." Levinson even spoke out overtly as the INC's spokeswoman, giving interviews on its behalf.

The State Department's efforts to control Chalabi through Burson-Marsteller ultimately backfired. In the course of his power struggle with his State Department patrons over who would control the Iraqi opposition and the stream of American funding, Chalabi would frequently criticize both US policy and his Iraqi competitors. The government would complain to BKSH. "We'd tell him.... And he'd say, 'Fine,' and go say the same thing over again," said Black. "Basically the US government couldn't make Chalabi do anything he didn't want to do." So while US taxpayers paid for BKSH's services, the company, from all appearances, worked for Ahmad Chalabi.

Normally, before campaigning on behalf of a foreign interest (which, after all, was what Chalabi was), the agent would register under the Justice Department's Foreign Agents Registration Act. That's required whenever someone represents a foreign interest in a "political or quasi-political" way. Examples include groups that at times had been allied with Chalabi, like Jalal Talabani's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan and Masoud Barzani's Kurdish Democratic Party. But since BKSH was paid by taxpayer funds through the State Department, it never registered as a foreign agent. Since it was not technically a "lobbyist" for Chalabi, even though that is exactly how it was functioning, it never registered on Capitol Hill either, which would be the norm for a lobbyist. Although the transaction was not classified or secret, journalists, legislators and the American public weren't told about it.

The last week of October 2003 had been particularly gory in Baghdad. Rockets tore into the Al-Rashid Hotel, where Paul Wolfowitz lay sleeping on a rare visit. Terrorists destroyed the International Red Cross compound, and then, on Wednesday, October 29, a land mine gutted a US Army Abrams tank outside Baghdad, killing two soldiers. That was the day BKSH and the Iraqi National Congress were honored for their work in the run-up to the war.

The black-tie award ceremony took place far from the violence in Iraq, in London, where more than 1,000 of the public relations industry elite assembled in a ballroom at the luxurious Grosvenor House Hotel. *PR Week* hosted the event, its annual awards dinner for public relations companies. Burson-Marsteller, whose subsidiary BKSH had carried out the work, was named the winner in the public affairs category. The "Awards Supplement" of *PR Week* called BKSH's work a "solid, disciplined campaign that is totally deserving of this award." "Of particular importance," said the citation, "was positioning INC founder Dr. Ahmad Chalabi and other Iraqi opposition spokespeople as authoritative political leaders." BKSH "compiled intelligence reports, defector briefings, conferences and seminars.... The PR team also ran a contact-building programme, focusing on the European Union, Downing Street, the Foreign Office and MPs in the UK, matched to a US programme aimed at the White House, the Senate, Congress and the Pentagon."

Few could have foreseen that Chalabi's massive propaganda campaign to encourage the US to invade Iraq would be paid for by US taxpayers.

The awards description does not mention that the funding came entirely from the US government, let alone that many of the campaign's claims turned out to be erroneous. But by the time BKSH won the award, the State Department's funding for the program had stopped, with the American troops surging through the desert. That did not mean that BKSH's Iraq work would end. Instead, having eased Chalabi's path to Baghdad, BKSH would now use its ties to Chalabi to get into the business of Iraqi reconstruction.

The business elite was eager for a seat at the table. Corporate executives flocked to conferences, corporations set up divisions to work on developing business in Iraq, consultancies thrived and newsletters proliferated to detail legal niceties and dispense advice. BKSH was going to get in on the ground floor of the industry. Charles Black said it was a busy time. "After the overthrow of Saddam Hussein a lot of US companies, some of our long-term clients as well as some people who weren't our clients, came to us and were looking to do business in Iraq," he explained. The problem, he said, was that BKSH was not "going to be over there. We didn't have an office over there or have full-time personnel."

But the Chalabi operation did. Margaret Bartel, an accountant who had been hired by the State Department to sort out the INC's books and stayed on to become a key member of the organization's staff, was taking in Defense Intelligence Agency funds and delivering them to Chalabi's intelligence operation. Zaab Sethna, Chalabi's press aide, was also in Iraq. As Black explains it, "Peg was there and Zaab was there, so we just referred business to them." Bartel and BKSH reached an agreement: in exchange for a referral fee, BKSH would send clients to Bartel's consulting company,

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which would set them up with contacts, influence, housing, security and everything else they would need to get themselves started on Iraqi reconstruction. In the gold rush of 1849, they say, it was not the miners who got rich but the operators who sold the picks and the shovels and the wagons and the denim. So it was in Iraq, with the likes of Bartel, the INC and BKSH. The American businessmen would be the miners taking their chances, and the PR operatives and INC loyalists were selling the picks and shovels.

In essence, all that was required was a small adjustment in their previous efforts. BKSH and Chalabi simply pivoted their operation. They realized that with Chalabi on the ground, they could sell access to him using the same sophisticated lobbying regime they already had in place. He had the sort of influence that corporate executives could use in their search for contracts.

One of the businessmen who signed up for the Iraq package was Albert Huddleston, an old BKSH customer. "Albert is a longtime client," Black explained. Huddleston, a Texas oilman and staunch supporter of George W. Bush, was a Bush "Minor League Pioneer" in the 2000 election, raising close to $100,000. In the 2004 election he contributed $100,000 to the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth, the group that targeted Senator John Kerry's campaign by publicizing discredited allegations about his military service. Huddleston's daughter even worked in the White House for First Lady Laura Bush.

After the invasion, BKSH and Chalabi pivoted their operation, realizing that they could sell access to him with the lobbying regime already in place.

Huddleston's interest in Iraq was logical and straightforward: he wanted oil deals, and his company, Hyperion Resources, wanted to be in a good position when the oil valves finally opened. So it was only natural that BKSH would refer him to the Chalabi allies who were offering to help American businessmen. "He was definitely interested in Iraq," Black recalled, "and we definitely hooked him up with that organization." The veterans of the PR and lobbying efforts of the INC went to work for Huddleston. They had focused for years on human rights, democracy and freedom. Now that the regime of Saddam Hussein was gone, they were dedicating more and more time to oil and business.

Over time, Sethna became indispensable in these efforts. "Whatever Albert wanted," recalled one associate, "it was Zaab's mission to go get it done." In the years after the Iraq invasion, Huddleston did his best to forge ties in Iraq. What he found at first was that there was no legitimate government to deal with under the occupation. Paul Bremer had no authority to negotiate oil deals, because occupying powers can't legally make decisions about a country's natural resources. And later, after Bremer left Iraq, the Iraqi government couldn't pass an oil law to regulate the industry. Nabeel Musawi, a former close Chalabi associate who later became a member of the temporary National Assembly, remembers Chalabi, Sethna, Bartel and their guest Huddleston coming to dinner to petition for help. They wanted to see if Musawi could set up a meeting between Huddleston and the oil minister. Musawi says he wanted to help but had to shrug them off because the oil minister was out of town.

Chalabi was well aware of Huddleston's connections to the Bush White House, and he fawned over the Texan, taking him out and offering him gifts. Chalabi presented him with a lavish crystal sculpture of an Iraqi reed house, which had to be shipped back to Texas. But for Huddleston, the pre-war promise of rosy prospects for American oilmen like himself was turning out to be an illusion. Chalabi and others had talked about Iraq's oil and the gushers to come, but despite all the oil under Iraq's desert, it was unobtainable. Deals made during the occupation would be shredded later. Huddleston never did make his huge oil strike in Iraq, despite the money he paid to Chalabi's people there.

Then there is the matter of how much money the American government itself spent on the services of Chalabi and his INC. One former member of the INC put it at about $90 million, but a safer and more conservative estimate of the total American taxpayer subsidy to Chalabi and his organization is $59 million over the course of eleven years. This includes an estimated $20 million from the CIA secret budget in the early 1990s (although it may be far more); add to this $33 million from the State Department in the years leading up to the war in Iraq and $6 million from the Defense Intelligence Agency starting in 2002.

Chalabi's fortunes have fluctuated wildly since the war. By mid-2006 it appeared that he had lost any prominent political role in Iraq, although he held on to his title as chairman of the de-Baathification commission. A new Iraqi government had finally taken shape, presumably a permanent one, and Chalabi seemed unsteady as he scrambled for new allies.

He began to make a public comeback, however, in the fall of 2007. One day in late October, dressed in one of his dark suits, he climbed into a US Army Black Hawk helicopter in Baghdad. As the rotors of the helicopter thumped, Chalabi was surrounded by American military men. His host was Gen. David Petraeus, commander of the multinational force in Iraq.

It had been only thirteen months since a majority of the members of the Senate Intelligence Committee had found that Chalabi's INC had "attempted to influence United States policy on Iraq" before the US invasion "by providing false information."

But Chalabi had survived, and he was soaring over the capital of Iraq in an American helicopter. The new Iraqi government had appointed him to a committee to oversee Baghdad's municipal "services." The hope was that Chalabi, with his organizational skills and his charm, could cut his way through the Iraqi government's red tape and spur on the efforts of the beleaguered Health, Electricity, Communications and Transportation ministries. And the Americans, once again, thought they had found a man they could work with. ■

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Adolf Hitler.

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Dr. Thomas Childers (Ph.D., Harvard University) is Professor of History at the University of Pennsylvania. His teaching awards include the Ira T. Abrahams Award for Distinguished Teaching and Challenging Teaching in the Arts and Sciences, the Richard S. Dunn Award for Distinguished Teaching in History, and the Senior Class Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching.

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Inside the Surge

The US occupation has torn Iraq into fragments, and sectarian militias are on the rise.

by NIR ROSEN

REUTERS

Blindfolded detainees are escorted into Iraqi Army headquarters in Baquba.

Driving to the Amriya district in western Baghdad in February, my friend pointed to a gap in the concrete walls with which the US occupation forces have surrounded this Sunni bastion. "We call it the Rafah Crossing," he joked, referring to the one gate from besieged Gaza to Egypt that another occupying army occasionally allows to open. Iraqi National Police loyal to Muqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army had once regularly attacked Amriya, and not long ago Sunnis caught in their checkpoints, which we drove through anxiously, would have been found in the city morgue. Shiite flags these policemen had recently put up all around western Baghdad were viewed as a provocation by the residents of Amriya. When we got out of the car so Iraqi soldiers could search it, a US soldier led his dog around to sniff it, and I was patted down by one of the Sunni militiamen. Not knowing I was an American, he reassured me. "Just let the dog and the dog that is with him finish with your car and you can go," he said, laughing.

We drove past residents forced to trudge long distances in and out of their neighborhood, past the tall concrete walls, because their cars had not been given permission to exit. Boys labored behind pushcarts, wheeling in goods for the shops that were open. One elderly woman in a black robe complained loudly that the Americans were to blame for all her problems. Amriya had been a stronghold of the Iraqi resistance since the early days of the occupation, and after Falluja was destroyed in late 2004 resistance members as well as angry displaced Sunnis poured in. Shiites were attacked even if they were former Baathists, their bodies found lying on the streets every day.

But by 2005, Shiite militias had been empowered by the Iraqi government; they began to punish Sunnis, with the help of the US military. Sunnis were pushed into the hands of Al Qaeda in Iraq. Soon more nationalist and less oppressive Sunni resistance groups clashed with extremists and rid themselves of Al Qaeda. The Americans think they have purchased Sunni loyalty by giving aid to these groups, but in fact it is the Sunnis who have bought the Americans. They describe the cooperation as a temporary cease-fire with the US occupation so that they can regroup to fight the "Iranian occupation," which is how they refer to the Shiite-dominated government and security forces.

The Americans forced the Iraqi government to promise 20 percent of these Sunni militiamen a place in the security forces, but those from Amriya who sought to join have been harassed and abused. They do not recognize the government of Iraq and view it as their main oppressor, which is why they stopped fighting the Americans. The Iraqi government will not integrate the Sunni militiamen into its regular forces, and the Sunni militiamen will not be demobilized. At a time when militias are the main problem in Iraq, the Americans have created more and are creating other institutions—such as neighborhood and district councils—that are separate from the Iraqi state, further supporting the fragmentation of a deeply divided country.

Forty percent of Amriya's homes have been abandoned, their owners expelled or having fled, and more than 5,000 Sunni families from elsewhere in Iraq have moved in, mostly to homes abandoned by Shiites. Of those who fled to Syria, about one-fifth returned in late 2007, after their money ran out. The Ministry of Migration, officially responsible for displaced Iraqis, has done nothing for them. The Ministry of Health, dominated by sectarian Shiites, neglected Amriya or sent expired medicines to its clinics. There is no hospital in the area, but Amriya's Sunnis are too scared to go to hospitals outside because Shiite militias might kidnap and kill them. As elsewhere in Iraq, the government-run ration system, upon which nearly all Iraqis had relied for their survival before the US invasion, does not reach the Sunnis of Amriya often, and when it does, most items are lacking. Children have been suffering from calcium deficiency as a result. More than 2,000 children have been orphaned in Amriya in the past few years.

Around the same time I went to Amriya, I was smuggled into the Shiite bastion of Washash, a slum adjacent to the formerly upscale Mansur district. Washash was walled off as well, unusual for a Shiite area. "We are like Palestine," a local tribal leader told me. I first visited Washash in April 2003, when its unpaved streets were awash with sewage and the nascent Mahdi Army was asserting itself. The Mahdi Army, now firmly controlling the area, had brutally slaughtered or expelled nearly all the Sunnis. Mahdi Army raids into neighboring Mansur to fight Al Qaeda or otherwise terrorize locals had prompted the Americans to surround Washash with walls, wiping out its markets, which had depended on nearby districts for their clientele. Washash's Shiites complained about sectarian abuse from the Iraqi Army. The Mahdi Army provided what services there were, and as militiamen gave me a tour, I filmed them. Somebody alerted the Iraqi Army, and its soldiers came looking for me. Mahdi Army men smuggled me out through a small exit in the walls, handing me over to Iraqi National Police for protection. "They are from our group," meaning from the Mahdi Army, the Shiite militiamen assured me.

This is Baghdad today: fiefdoms run by warlords and militiamen. The Americans call them gated communities. In Sunni and Shiite neighborhoods, I found that displaced Iraqis, said to be more aggressive than locals, were overwhelmingly joining militias. The Bush Administration and the US military have stopped talking of Iraq as a grand project of nation-building, and the US

Nir Rosen, a freelance writer based in Beirut, has spent most of the past five years reporting from occupied Iraq. His updated paperback, The Triumph of the Martyrs in Iraq, *will be published in April.*

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media have dutifully done the same. They too have abandoned any larger narrative, presenting Iraq as a series of small pieces. Just as Iraq is physically deconstructed, so too is it intellectually deconstructed, not as an occupied country undergoing several civil wars but as small stories of local heroes and villains, of well-meaning American soldiers, of good news here and progress there. But the whole is less than the sum of its parts.

Most embedded journalists, just like embedded politicians and members of think tanks on Washington's K Street, lack language skills and time on the ground in Iraq—and since they are white, they cannot travel around Baghdad without attracting attention and getting kidnapped or killed. They know nothing about Iraq except what they gain second- or thirdhand, too often information provided by equally disconnected members of the US military. Recently we have seen positive articles about events in Iraq published by Anthony Cordesman of the Center for Strategic International Studies, Michael O'Hanlon and Kenneth Pollack of the Brookings Institution and Russia expert Fred Kagan of the American Enterprise Institute, who insists Iraq is not an occupied country. Kagan, like the other alleged experts, speaks no Arabic and was baby-sat for a few days by American soldiers. But it seems that these and other propagandists for the war, with Thomas Friedman being the greatest criminal in this category, manage to maintain their credibility no matter how much they get wrong.

They should ask Iraqis, or the journalists who courageously risk their lives to spend enough time with Iraqis to serve as their interlocutors—such as Leila Fadel of McClatchy, Ghaith Abdul Ahad of the *Guardian* or Patrick Cockburn of the London *Independent*—what is actually happening in Iraq, rather than continue to deceive the American people with the fantasy of "victory." It is true that fewer US soldiers are dying today, but that is not the proper metric of success. Of course fewer Americans are dying; in 2006 the conflict in Iraq stopped being a war of national liberation against the American occupiers and became chiefly a war among Iraqis for domination of Iraq. The proper standard for judging Iraq is the quality of life for Iraqis, and, sadly for most, life was better under Saddam.

There is no reconciliation among the various warring communities. Shiites will not allow the territorial gains they've made to be chipped away by Sunnis returning to their homes, and they are determined to keep the Sunni militias out of power. Violence is slightly down in Iraq in large part because the goal of an earlier stage of the conflict—removing Sunnis from Shiite areas and Shiites from Sunni areas—has largely succeeded, and there are fewer people to kill. There may be many years of bloodshed left before equilibrium can be attained.

Many Americans are also unaware that a foreign military occupation is a systematic imposition of violence and terror on an entire people. The Americans are not peacekeepers; they are not there to "help" the Iraqi people. At least 24,000 Iraqis languish in American-run prisons. At least 900 of these are juveniles, some of whom are forced to go through a brainwashing program called the House of Wisdom, where US officers arrogantly lecture Muslims about Islam. The Americans are supposed to hand over Iraqi prisoners to Iraqi authorities, but international human rights officials are loath to press the issue because conditions in Iraqi prisons are at

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least as bad as they were under Saddam. One US officer told me that six years is a life sentence in an Iraqi prison today, because that is your estimated life span there. In the women's prison in Khadimiya prisoners are routinely raped.

Conditions in Iraqi prisons got much worse during the surge because the Iraqi system could not cope with the massive influx. Even those Iraqis in American detention do not know why they are being held, and they are never visited by defense lawyers. The Americans can hold Iraqis indefinitely, so they don't even have to be tried by Iraqi courts. A fraction are tried in courts where Americans also testify. But the direct observers I've talked to have yet to see a trial where they are convinced the accused is guilty and there is valid evidence that is properly examined, with no coerced confessions. Lawyers don't see their clients before trials, and there are no witnesses. Iraqi judges are prepared to convict on very little evidence. But even if Iraqi courts find Iraqi prisoners innocent, the Americans sometimes continue to hold them after acquittal. There are currently about 500 of these "on hold" cases. The Americans continue to arrest all men of military age when looking for suspects, to break into homes and traumatize sleeping families and to bomb heavily populated areas, killing civilians routinely. Recently the Americans killed civilians while bombing Tikrit, and now the Americans are serving as the air force for the Shiite militias they are backing—Dawa and the Badr militia—against the rival Sadrists. In the last week of March a one-day curfew was imposed in Baghdad and then extended for additional days; people simply venturing out of their homes were threatened with detention.

Though Americans like John McCain attribute the lull in violence to the surge, the decline coincided almost exactly with Sadr's decision to impose a freeze, often mistranslated as a cease-fire, on his Mahdi Army militia. This clearly demonstrated who was most responsible for the violence over the past year. It also coincided with another phenomenon that was not part of the American plan but came as a boon to the beleaguered Bush Administration. Members of the Sunni resistance who fought the Americans and engaged in organized crime grew weary of the radicals in Anbar province, who undermined traditional authority figures and harmed smuggling routes. After the resistance groups rebelled against Al Qaeda in Iraq, the Americans started paying other Sunni militias in Baghdad to do the same. But when the Americans tried to repeat the Anbar model in violent Diyala province, they failed.

In Baghdad the small Sunni militias that Americans pay view themselves not as security guards or concerned citizens but as part of a Sunni movement to take back their country from the Shiites. This is a nightmare for the Iraqi government, which succeeded in expelling most of Baghdad's Sunnis and turning the capital into a mostly Shiite city. Now, thanks to the Americans, the Sunnis, formerly on the run, once again control their own territory. The Americans have never grasped the importance of ideology and resistance to occupation. They insist that Iraqis join militias and the resistance for the money, and so they believe that Iraqis are joining American-backed militias for the money too. But the Sunnis the Americans are paying today joined the resistance out of a desire to fight the occupiers, to protect themselves, to seize power, to kill Shiites and "Persians," for an array of reasons, none of them financial. Likewise, men joined the Mahdi Army, which does not provide salaries, not for the money but out of loyalty to the Sadrist movement, out of solidarity with their Shiite brethren or out of fear of Sunni attack. Until late March the Mahdi Army was consolidating its forces, ridding itself of unruly elements and waiting out the surge. Sunnis and Shiites were preparing to resume fighting. But even among Shiites, there is no unity. Likewise there is no Sunni unity, and various Sunni militias compete for power and resources. When fighting resumes, we could see wholesale slaughter. Syria and Jordan, the main safe havens for Iraqis in the first round of the civil war, have now virtually closed their borders to refugees. Eleven of Iraq's eighteen governorates have closed their borders to internally displaced Iraqis. There will be nowhere to run when round two of the civil war begins. ■

Letters

(continued from page 2)

having spilled their blood, HOSSAIN told CI-1 that he was a member of Jamaat-e-Islami ('JEI'), a group identified by public source information as an Islamic fundamentalist political party in Pakistan with chapters in Bangladesh.

"When a third party joined the conversation, the three discussed politics. During the conversation, HOSSAIN stated that he was a 'Nazim,' or administrator for JEI."

Rather than take a position on whether Hossain was a member of JeI—something about which Bartosiewicz seems to have her doubts—*Jihad Incorporated* merely states the fact that the complaint reports Hossain's incriminating statement to an FBI informant.

STEVEN EMERSON, *executive director*
The Investigative Project on Terrorism

Bartosiewicz Replies

BROOKLYN, N.Y.

As Steven Emerson surely knows, criminal indictments or complaints are the government's allegations and are not always borne out at trial. That's why it's a tricky proposition to rely on them so heavily. No evidence beyond this single comment was brought in Hossain's trial to support his being an "administrator" or a meaningful member of JeI. Even if he had been, that's neither a crime nor an incriminating statement, as the group is not a designated foreign terrorist organization. Many things can be said about Aref and Hossain, but if, as Emerson's book seems to suggest, Hossain is among the best examples of a fundamentalist JeI presence within our borders, we can all sleep more peacefully.

PETRA BARTOSIEWICZ

Corrections & Clarification

In Laila Al-Arian's "Winter Soldiers Speak" [April 7], it was incorrectly stated that John Kerry testified in Detroit at the 1971 Winter Soldier Investigation. He attended the event in Detroit, but he testified three months later before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

In Marcela Valdes's "Windows Into the Night" [March 31], Michael Chabon, Douglas Coupland and Raymond Chandler were labeled American, instead of *North* American, novelists (Coupland is Canadian). Also, the last names of Amaldo Nuervo and Vicente Huidobro were misspelled.

In Tom Hayden's "The Old Revolutionaries of Vietnam" [March 10], an editorial error made it seem that Lady Borton was describing party leaders as "bulldogs." She was describing the Vietnamese press.

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Books & the Arts.

La Zone Grise

by ALICE KAPLAN

Memory
By Philippe Grimbert.
Translated by Polly McLean.
Simon and Schuster. 152 pp. $19.95.

David Golder, The Ball, Snow in Autumn, The Courilof Affair
By Irène Némirovsky.
Translated by Sandra Smith.
Knopf/Everyman's Library. 363 pp. $25.

La Vie d'Irène Némirovsky
By Olivier Philipponnat and Patrick Lienhardt.
Grasset/Denoël. 503 pp. 23.60 euros.

Le Mirador
By Elisabeth Gille.
Stock. 421 pp. 20 euros.

Shadows of a Childhood
By Elisabeth Gille.
Translated by Linda Coverdale.
New Press. 138 pp. $14.95.

COURTESY OF DENISE EPSTEIN

Irène Némirovsky, circa 1930

By now, many of the French people who lived through the massive deportations of Jews from France during World War II are gone, but the French literary preoccupation with that national tragedy is still renewed almost annually. The novelists from the first generation of survivors have given way to what Susan Suleiman has called the "1.5 generation"—children born during the war but too young to have understood what was happening around them. A second generation, born after the war but marked by their parents' experience, by now has produced a significant body of literature as well. It has always been difficult to read books by Holocaust survivors with a critical eye: as we know, a tragic family legacy is no guarantee of literary success, and this difficulty has endured with generation 2.0.

Memory, the translation of a recent novel by Philippe Grimbert, takes on an important sociological issue: the experience of Jewish children born just after the war to parents whose lives had been drastically altered by their war experience but who preferred to keep their wartime suffering hidden from their offspring. The French 1950s, for Jewish families especially, was a time of frightful quietude. From 1945 to 1957, several thousand French Jews changed their names; many others converted to Catholicism. It is difficult today to understand that this strong desire to assimilate was grounded in fear. For some French Jews, bearing a Jewish-sounding name was the equivalent of wearing a yellow star—it marked them as outsiders, prey to a possible return of anti-Semitic politics. Children of survivors and children of those who perished in the camps alike were doomed to contend with this zeal for assimilation, which led in many cases to the repression of wartime losses and family secrets. Nadine Fresco, who studied a group of these children in adulthood, has described their predicament with a memorable phrase: "a diaspora of ashes."

Grimbert's novel might be understood as a textbook demonstration of Fresco's "diaspora." Published in France in 2006 as *Un Secret*, then translated in England as *Secret*, it has been renamed *Memory* by its American publisher. The title is a misnomer, since what Grimbert intends is a war story that his narrator, born after the war, can't possibly remember but must come to understand for his own psychological survival. The skewed American title is only one of the problems with a book (and a translation) that manages to be both fascinating and irritating, formulaic and excessive, playing to the reader's expectations almost too knowingly.

The story begins in ordinary childhood anguish. A scrawny, insecure boy is obsessed with the imaginary brother who has the strength and agility he lacks—qualities he

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Alice Kaplan teaches French literature and history at Duke University and is the author, among other books, of French Lessons, The Collaborator: The Trial and Execution of Robert Brasillach *and* The Interpreter.

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wishes he had inherited from his athletic parents. He follows his mother into the attic, where he finds a toy dog whose existence sends her into a panic. He grabs it and brings it downstairs, to the great discomfort of his parents. He doesn't yet know that this toy animal is the only surviving clue to a family secret he will learn several years later: he did have a brother—actually a half brother, who was deported along with his father's first wife.

The task of the narrator of *Memory* will be to reconstruct the guilt-laden family story that has been kept from him. His father, Maxime, was married to a woman named Hannah but lusted after Hannah's sister-in-law, Tania. Only after Hannah was deported with their son Simon, and Tania's husband died in captivity, was he able to marry Tania. Out of guilt or lack of courage, Maxime and Tania decided to keep their former lives hidden from their son, who nonetheless bears the burden of their repression.

Writers who mock their own social or ethnic milieu have always been attacked as traitors.

The secretive parents in *Memory* are far from likable: Maxime, the narrator's narcissistic father, obsessed with physical fitness and ashamed of his Jewish family, is almost too silly to be odious. But Hannah, Maxime's first wife, is beautifully vulnerable in her jealousy; and Louise, the family friend who finally breaks the spell of silence to the suffering boy, has a lonely solidity that is perfect for her role.

Grimbert, a psychoanalyst, has acknowledged that *Memory* is based on his own family story. He uses his own name for the family in his novel, portrays his grown narrator as a psychoanalyst and tells his story in an intimate first-person voice, as though it were a memoir. He has an acute sense of the symbolic, so that everything from Louise's orthopedic shoe to a dog cemetery on the grounds of Pierre Laval's daughter's estate—the counterpart to the narrator's stuffed toy dog—is shot through with meaning. This works passably well in French, a language well-known for its friendly embrace of abstraction. In English, Polly McLean's often too literal English translation results in some truly terrible sentences, of which I'm quoting two of the worst: "What to do with this adjective, inseparable from my emaciated body so reminiscent of those I had seen floating in too-big pajama uniforms?" and "The yellow stain distinguished them to others but also allowed them to recognize one another, binding together a community that, because it was hiding itself, had sometimes not realized its own existence." This can be wearying.

Memory is, finally, a conversion narrative about the psychological health that emerges once family secrets are uncovered, yet the narrator's transition from gawky boy to knowing analyst is a bit too magical. But what is most successful in *Memory*—so successful, in fact, that one races through the book, almost unaware of what's going on from sentence to sentence—is its cleverly unfolding structure and the terrific sense of satisfaction for the reader when the narrator's imaginary sibling turns out to be his intuition of the very real sibling whose existence and death have been hidden from him. It's up to the narrator to do the heroic work of excavating the real from the clues of his imagination, without any help from his childlike parents. *Memory* won the French literary prize given by high school students to their favorite book—a fitting reward for this story of an adolescent's psychological and intellectual triumph over his flawed parents.

Grimbert's book was, as his US publisher puts it, "a colossal bestseller" when it appeared in France, but its success didn't approach the excitement that had greeted the publication in 2004 of *Suite Française*, a devastating portrait of French society written during the early years of the occupation. The novel was celebrated for its irony, its brilliant construction and its flair—part Edith Wharton, part Chekhov. But even more astonishing to readers was the fact that while the novel's author, Irène Némirovsky, had died of typhus in Auschwitz in 1942, her manuscript somehow survived the war and was being brought to life sixty-two years after it was drafted.

Perhaps what Grimbert had to contend with in imagining his parents' complex lives before the war is something like the situation faced by those American readers who first fell in love with Némirovsky when a translation of *Suite Française* was published in 2006, making it one of the few French novels in translation to reach the *New York Times* bestseller list in several decades. (The paperback edition has been on the *Times*'s trade fiction bestseller list for nearly thirty weeks.) Now, with the US publication of a volume of Némirovsky's early novels in Sandra Smith's clearheaded translation, those same readers must contend with her troubling life and work leading up to the war. Whereas Olivier Philipponnat and Patrick Lienhardt, Némirovsky's French biographers, manage to describe her ambivalent relationship to Judaism and to French society without any finger-wagging, the same isn't true for American critics, who seem to be gearing up for a fight. Ruth Franklin has announced "the nasty truth" about Némirovksy in *The New Republic*, while Allen Barra in *Salon*, with more curiosity, has asked how we can separate her talent from the ugliness of her views. It's proving tempting to take Némirovsky as an occasion for moral sparing, to treat her circumstances in black and white and reduce her work to a symptom of its time. Her conflicts, her struggles, her changes of heart are silenced by this prosecutorial zeal. The crux of the matter in all these debates is the representation of Jewish characters in her early fiction and the company she kept. No wonder there's a defensive undercurrent to Claire Messud's substantial preface to the Everyman's Library edition of the four early works.

David Golder, *The Ball*, *Snow in Autumn* and *The Courilof Affair* were published between 1929 and 1933, when Némirovsky was an ingénue. They consolidated her literary reputation as a Russian Jewish émigré who wrote in perfect French and cast a cynical, disparaging eye on the world around her. In an American context, the decision to include these works in the Everyman's Library edition marks the strong desire to place Némirovsky's fiction on a select shelf of the classics alongside the works of Ford Madox Ford and Cormac McCarthy. *Snow in Autumn* ("autumn flies" in French, which has a more desperate resonance) is told from the perspective of a senile servant to a White Russian family condemned to a shabby Paris exile. *The Ball*, a short story Némirovsky tossed off while she was writing *David Golder*, recounts an adolescent girl's vengeance against her social-climbing mother: she throws her mother's party invitations into the river and watches, with glee, when nobody shows up to the ball. In *The Courilof Affair*, a world-weary terrorist recounts in slow motion his most difficult assignment: the murder of a highly placed government minister in the days preceding the October Revolution. *The Courilof Affair* poses the same existential problem as Camus's *The Just Assassins*: how can you kill a man once you've looked him in the eye? What unites all these stories, whether the point of view is that of an

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aristocratic White Russian, an immigrant Jewish financier or a revolutionary terrorist, is a technique that is as visual as it is psychological: an excruciating close-up on an extreme state of mind.

This quality is most vivid in *David Golder*, the longest novella in the collection. One of Némirovsky's earliest books, made into a movie and a play, it was hotly debated on the French literary scene of 1929–30 and propelled her to fame while she was still in her 20s. Because of the controversy surrounding its original publication, *David Golder* is an essential work for understanding Némirovsky's literary career and her legacy.

We meet financier David Golder as he is driving his business partner Simon Marcus to suicide over a financial betrayal. Soon the tables turn on Golder and he succumbs to despair. Surrounded by the signs of his financial empire—a spoiled wife living in a marble mansion in Biarritz; a beautiful daughter he adores, who approaches him only for money—he suffers a sudden heart attack, and for the rest of the novel he is, in the most vivid and literal sense, dying of a broken heart. In the depth of despair, he decides to liquidate his entire fortune, to consolidate and live out the abandonment he feels. Hiding out in an empty Paris apartment with his old friend Soifer as his only companion, he launches one last plot for financial vengeance. In the end, the whole book amounts to a bitter cry of pain: over his life, his loveless marriage, a family who drains him of every penny and the emptiness of his financial success. A steamship takes him back to the Russian port town of his youth, where he experiences a brief and intense stab of tenderness at the sight of all he had left: his cousin's shoemaker shop, the old dark alleyways, the houses made of rickety wood. Throughout the novel are close-ups of Golder's face, more and more grotesque with illness, and a host of references to the Jewish "race."

Soon after *David Golder* was published in 1929, there appeared in the French press a sustained polemic about whether the book was anti-Semitic—even though Némirovsky was Jewish. Golder and his world corresponded too well to French fears about corrupting Jewish capital. Philipponnat and Lienhardt describe the bemused response of a journalist for *L'Univers Israélite*, the newspaper of liberal, assimilated French Judaism, who concluded after interviewing her that Némirovsky wasn't an anti-Semite—though she didn't identify as a Jew, either, and couldn't actually be counted as a Jewish writer.

Némirovsky's portrait of David Golder struck me in the end as far more poignant than grotesque, for there is something noble and completely disinterested about his progressive renunciation of a wasted life. The spare language of his death scene, with its appeal to the senses, is Némirovsky at her best:

> He could feel snowflakes on his lips, which melted with the taste of ice and water so familiar to him from the past. And he could hear someone calling: "David, David…" A voice hushed by the snow, the low, dark sky…. A small voice that suddenly grew fainter and faded away, as if heading in a different direction. It was the last sound he was to hear on this earth.

Given the delicacy of this passage, it is extremely discomforting to know that right-wing French critics who prided themselves on their anti-Semitism—including Robert Brasillach and Jean-Pierre Maxence and Paul Morand—may well have read *David Golder* with relish, not because of its poignancy but because it corresponded to their prejudices. The question remains: does their response preclude any other reading?

In *David Golder*, Némirovsky was drawing on specific stereotypes associated with Jewish immigration from the East and Jewish wealth. In *The Ball*, those clichés reappear in a lighter vein: Monsieur Kampf is "a dry little Jew"; the guest list for Madame Kampf's party includes Abraham and Rebecca Birbaum, who have purchased a title and become the Count and Countess Poirier. Making fun of Jewish names and a Jewish "infiltration" of the French aristocracy is standard in every anti-Semitic text of the period, from *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* to Céline's *Bagatelles pour un massacre*. The theme is also central to Proust. There is no question that Némirovsky had a gift for starting with the raw material of stock characters—Catholic spinsters, nouveaux riches Jews, society hostesses—and breathing life into them. Writers who mock their own social or ethnic milieu have always been attacked as traitors. In the French context, Proust remains the best example. There's endless debate about whether he was a self-hating Jew (despite his early support for the cause of Captain Dreyfus) or a particularly lucid analyst of an aspiring Jewish bourgeoisie—or both. The young Némirovsky, like Proust, liked to skewer literary versions of the people she knew best: her mother and her mother's friends, many of whom she hated. Does she hate Jews or does she hate her mother? Are her Jewish stock characters tinged with racism? There's a lot of gray area to explore.

Perspective plays an unavoidable role in this debate. It's impossible today not to read Némirovsky's life and work backward from the 1940s, from the disaster of her deportation. What the young writer couldn't have known when she portrayed the decadent world of rich Jews in Biarritz is that four years later, in December 1933, a financial scandal in the neighboring town of Bayonne involving a Russian-Jewish financier named Alexandre Stavisky would give way to an unprecedented wave of anti-Semitic hatred in France that, in turn, would set off the nationalist riots of February 6, 1934, which nearly toppled the government, marking the beginning of a reign of hatred that would send Némirovsky to the death camps in 1942.

Némirovsky was not a political writer, but she understood the importance of context for literary reception, and she was as tough and lucid about herself as she was about her characters. As time passed she felt more and more remorse, not over her novel but over what she had come to understand about its readers. A year after the February 1934 riots, she wrote in her diary, "If there had been Hitler, I would have greatly toned down *David Golder*, and I wouldn't have written it in the same fashion." Three years later, her regret turned to horror: "How could I write such a thing?" She is not the first writer to have grappled with the terrible sense of losing control of the reception of what she had written. In her case, issues of reception were dwarfed by much more serious political and legal disenfranchisement, then by her murder, in the most grotesque series of events imaginable. And if there had been no posthumous Némirovsky, *David Golder* would be the work for which she'd still be remembered—ambivalently.

By the time France fell to the Germans, Némirovsky had converted to Catholicism in hopes of obtaining French citizenship, and by targeting French Catholics in her fiction, she was once again zeroing in on her own intimate world, sparing no one. *Suite Française* has no Jewish characters, but it bitterly indicts the French conservatives, the Pétainists, who emerge from her pen every bit as self-interested and venal as David Golder and his associates. Némirovsky herself spent the last years of her life struggling to make ends meet with her husband and two daughters in Issy-l'Evêque,

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a village in the occupied zone, where she worked on *Suite Française* until her arrest. She had left the fold of Bernard Grasset, the publisher of *David Golder*, in 1933. He was now publishing Fascist pamphlets and, like every other editor in Paris, had been ordered by the Nazis to shred his stock of books by Jewish authors (though he did not include Némirovsky among them). Her second publisher, Robert Esménard, was a steady source of financial support to her and later to her surviving children. Horace de Carbuccia, the editor of one of the most violently racist collaborationist newspapers of the occupation years, helped her make ends meet by publishing her last stories. From December 1940 to February 1942 (five months before her arrest), Némirovsky published seven short stories for Carbuccia's *Gringoire* under the pseudonyms Pierre Nérey and Charles Blancat, and sometimes with just the phrase "a short story written by a young woman." Yet this same Carbuccia published articles ridiculing the Jews who had fled to the unoccupied zone and changed their names. As Némirovsky's French biographers point out, Carbuccia was fond of Némirovsky—and, they remind us, there's no logic to "great affection."

Gringoire wasn't always synonymous with French Fascism. Némirovsky had been brought into the fold of Carbuccia's newspaper in the 1930s by the Jewish immigrant writer Joseph Kessel, who became a hero of the French Resistance in London and wrote the great Resistance anthem "Le Chant des Partisans." Kessel had been in charge of *Gringoire*'s literary pages but left the paper angrily in 1937 when it turned racist.

With France's defeat in 1940 and the passage of anti-Semitic legislation by Vichy, *Gringoire*'s racism only grew. In July 1941, a cartoon on page one targeted Jews, Freemasons, Communists and bankers. On February 27, 1942, a front-page article made fun of Léon Blum's "Jewish defense" at his trial in Riom (Pétain tried the members of the Popular Front government for responsibility in the fall of France); Irène Némirovsky published her story "L'Incendie" (The Fire) as Pierre Nérey in the same issue. In every wartime issue of *Gringoire*, de Gaulle is the traitor, Pétain the savior; the Jews and the Communists are the enemies. The copious literary pages of the newspaper offered distraction from current events.

It's worth underlining the fact that Némirovsky wasn't the only respectable writer who was publishing in *Gringoire* during the occupation. A figure as beloved as Colette, who was, at the time, hiding her Jewish husband to protect him from arrest, also appeared in its literary pages, and her personal situation was nearly as removed from *Gringoire*'s politics as Némirovsky's. How closely did the two writers read the headlines? What regret did they have to swallow? Did either of them imagine that their affiliation with *Gringoire* offered some form of protection? Both cases are painful to imagine, especially when you turn to the political pages of *Gringoire*. On August 21, 1942, nearly six weeks after Némirovsky's arrest by French police and deportation to Auschwitz, the paper announced in its news column: "Towards a happy solution to the Jewish question: we have learned that the Germans have decided to park the Jews in Poland."

In Elisabeth Gille's *Le Mirador*, there is no cure, no resolution, only signs of incompleteness.

In the face of such painful truths, there is a book still not translated from the French that can help readers of *Suite Française* and *David Golder* approach the ambiguity in Némirovsky's life and work in a profound and empathetic way. Elisabeth Gille's *Le Mirador* (The Watchtower), published in 1992, introduces us to Irène Némirovsky as she was imagined by the daughter who never knew her beyond age 5. Gille, who grew up to be one of the most respected literary editors in Paris, is not interested in defending her mother's reputation. Instead, she sets out to live in her mother's head. Gille portrays Irène Némirovsky on the eve of deportation, trying to imagine how her two young daughters would remember her in ten or twenty years: "What will they be able to reproach me…when they are grown women?" Every word in quotation marks in *Le Mirador* is an actual phrase of Némirovsky's, gleaned by Gille from letters and from her mother's copious work-in-progress notebooks—and these words help foster a powerful sense of her character. The daughter creates not only her mother's subjectivity but her mother's relationship to her—the relationship of which she was deprived. Gille interspersed Némirovsky's imagined memoirs with passages in italics that represent her own fragmented memories of growing up in postwar France. In giving her mother a fictional consciousness, Gille had to contend not only with Némirovsky's death at Auschwitz but with her mother's literary legacy—the part she was proud of and the part she was ashamed of.

How to understand the figure of David Golder, with his "flabby arms and legs," the "mottled bluish patches on his pale skin and the two folds sunk into the thick flesh around his mouth like the drooping jowls on an old dog"? Gille imagines Némirovsky responding to press reports of the anti-Jewish exhibit held at the Palais Berlitz in 1941, wondering angrily if her first publisher thought she was one of the Jewish writers skewered at the exhibit: "Jewish writers," a poster at the exhibit proclaimed, "transmit above all in their works their social anxiety and sexual perversions. They are temperamentally destructive of all the ideals, of the old French customs, of the honest values of the provinces, of respect for their country and its beliefs." Gille imagines her mother contemplating the description of Jews by George Montandon, the infamous pseudo-ethnologist who made a fortune under Vichy giving "Aryan" certificates to desperate French Jews. The Jewish subject, Montandon proclaimed, had a "strongly convex nose, thick lips, eyes deep in their sockets…frizzy hair, big ears that stick out, shoulders slightly bowed, thick or fat hips, flat feet…" Gille doesn't give any verdict; she doesn't accuse. She doesn't compare Montandon's description to the descriptions in *David Golder*. She gives us the language that was circulating in Irène Némirovsky's world. Neither forgiving nor condemning, she lets us draw our own conclusions.

And then she creates a Némirovsky who has trouble forgiving herself. At 20, her fictional Irène muses, had she been "too busy partying to notice what was going on around her"? Why hadn't she noticed the students from the Action Française disrupting the lectures given by Jewish professors at the Sorbonne? "Hadn't [she] been reading the papers?" Gille has Némirovsky scrutinizing her own actions in the third person with the same caustic drive that characterizes her fiction. It's an extraordinary tribute—a reflection on Némirovsky's personality and style as powerful as *Suite Française*.

It has been a longstanding cliché that France needs to "come to terms" with the occupation, to overcome the tremendous burden of Vichy's complicity in the deportation of 76,000 Jews to the death camps. Books like Grimbert's *Memory* seem to want to enact a revelation and a cure—a success-

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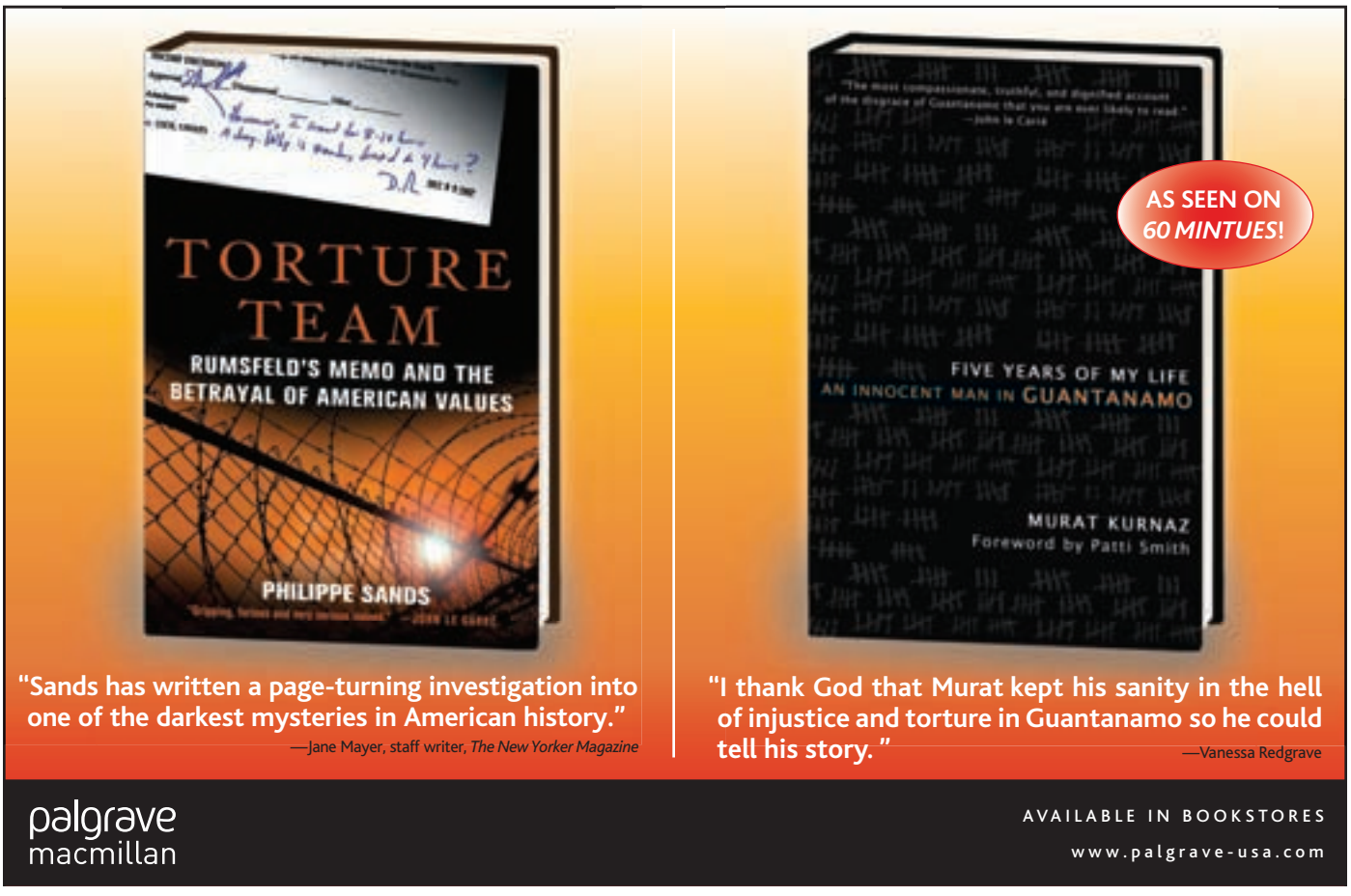
ful "coming to terms" with repressed losses, whereas Gille's *Le Mirador*, written in a very different key, expresses the longing for a relationship the author could never have, with its equal parts of love and conflict. There is no cure here, no resolution, only the signs of incompleteness.

Still, it is tempting to tell the story of Elisabeth Gille as a triumph over a cruel beginning. She discovered her literary talent at the culmination of her career as a translator and literary editor. After *Le Mirador* and a subsequent book about her bout with cancer, in 1998 she published *Shadows of a Childhood*, the fictionalized chronicle of her years in hiding and her coming of age in postwar France. *Shadows* first appeared in English six years before the excavation of *Suite Française*, when Némirovsky was unknown. Its reissue this spring will give Gille a new and deserved readership.

Like Grimbert's *Memory*, Gille's *Shadows of a Childhood* is grounded in the author's past. Eschewing the intimate first person, Gille establishes a distance from her main character, Léa, telling her story largely from the point of view of the people who care for her after she is orphaned: first a nun, whom she calls Sister Saint-Gabriel, then a couple in the Resistance whose daughter becomes her best friend and her only link to happiness and normality. In one horrifying scene, Sister Saint-Gabriel takes the child to the Parisian apartment building where her parents had lived before the war. The concierge has moved all her parents' antique furniture and silver into her own flat and assures the nun that the repatriated Jews are all living in luxury at the Hotel Lutetia. Sister Saint-Gabriel and Léa go next to the Hotel Lutetia, the headquarters for people in search of camp survivors. Here is where the novel leaves its realist foundations and moves into the realm of nightmare. (Gille translated J.G. Ballard's *Empire of the Sun* a decade before writing *Shadows of a Childhood*, and her rendering of the hotel has the feel of Ballard's surreal landscape.) A concentration camp survivor, reduced to a skeletal grimace, explains to Léa her parents' fate, hissing at her: "Gassed. Poisoned like rats. Burned in an oven. Turned into black smoke. Poof, your parents. Poof." The curse of this truth sends her into a spiral of secret obsession with the war and a greater and greater indifference to life. A novel that begins much like Louis Malle's gentle tragedy *Au revoir les enfants* ends in a much darker mode.

Gille made a crucial literary decision by letting us see the disturbed child Léa—the literary version of her childhood self—through the eyes of adults who were not only baffled by her obsessions but who found her almost impossible to love. This distance from her past self allows Gille to convey the postwar reality of a French nation hellbent on reconstruction, for whom Léa's anger was simply beyond comprehension. The power of *Shadows of a Childhood*, its historical truth, depends on the disjunction between a young girl's death grip on the past and the upbeat world in which she lives. By the end of the novel, Léa is so disturbed that if she had been its narrator, *Shadows of a Childhood* might have descended into an intolerable pathos.

There are different ways to remember, different ways to commemorate and different ways to write. When the subject matter seems to call for automatic consecration, it's all the more important to read, and write, critically. Elisabeth Gille's life experiences might have led her to her subject, but in the end it was her literary art, not her family history, that enabled Irène Némirovsky's daughter to find a voice and a style commensurate with her shattering subject. ■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US paratroopers of the 101st Airborne Division rest atop Dong Ap Bia Mountain, May 21, 1969.

Questions of Loyalty

by MATT STEINGLASS

Dong Ap Bia is a double-humped mountain covered in broad-leaved subtropical forest, rising a thousand feet above A Shau Valley in central Vietnam. By the end of May 1969 there was scarcely a tree left alive on Dong Ap Bia, which had been pulverized by artillery barrages and airstrikes as three US battalions fought to drive a North Vietnamese Army (NVA) regiment from the summit of what the Americans had taken to calling Hamburger Hill. The nickname referred to the heavy casualties sustained by US forces, particularly those of the Third Battalion of the 187th Infantry Brigade under the hard-driving Lieut. Col. Weldon Honeycutt, who, after ten days of struggling through fortified enemy positions, finally reached the top of the mountain on May 20. The battle ended with the annihilation of the NVA regiment, but press coverage of the fighting reinforced the American public's sense that the war had been fought to a stalemate, particularly after US forces abandoned the hill they had won at such cost. Hamburger Hill was the last major confrontation between American and North Vietnamese ground forces: under pressure to reduce casualties, the Nixon Administration accelerated its program of "Vietnamization," training and equipping the South Vietnamese (the Army of the Republic of Vietnam, or ARVN) to carry on the fight, while withdrawing US troops. From the beginning of the war, Americans had been reluctant, as LBJ put it in 1964, to "send American boys nine or ten thousand miles away from home to do what Asian boys ought to be doing for themselves." After Hamburger Hill, they no longer would.

Matt Steinglass is a journalist based in Hanoi.

Vietnam's Forgotten Army
Heroism and Betrayal in the ARVN.
By Andrew Wiest.
NYU. 350 pp. $35.

Phoenix and the Birds of Prey
Counterinsurgency and Counterterrorism in Vietnam.
By Mark Moyar.
Bison. 448 pp. Paper $23.95.

The traditional account of Hamburger Hill treats it as a microcosm of the Vietnam War: a bullheaded American officer driving reluctant GIs to conquer useless territory, a tactical victory that became a strategic defeat, with the South Vietnamese themselves absent from the field. But according to University of Southern Mississippi history professor Andrew Wiest's new book, *Vietnam's Forgotten Army: Heroism and Betrayal in the ARVN*, the traditional account is in one crucial respect wrong. The 3/187th under Honeycutt did not capture Hamburger Hill. The summit was first taken by an ARVN battalion commanded by a remarkable South Vietnamese officer, Col. Pham Van Dinh. Dinh and his battalion, arriving as reinforcements on May 19, had sneaked up the hill via an unexpected route the next morning and could have mopped up the remaining NVA forces from the rear. But they were ordered off the summit by US commanders, apparently so that Honeycutt and his men could take credit for the victory.

Wiest's book falls broadly within the recent wave of "revisionist" histories of Vietnam, and it addresses a real inconsistency in the liberal consensus narrative of the war, which holds that the government of South Vietnam was much like the Iraqi government today: a regime no one would fight for, a dysfunctional pseudo-state propped up by American largesse and corruption. "Without an ideology or even a positive purpose to inspire loyalty," as Stanley Karnow's seminal history *Vietnam* has it, "the Saigon leaders could only purchase fidelity." In the works of David Halberstam, Neil Sheehan and other critical war reporters, the Government of the Republic of Vietnam (GVN) appears as a sham government riven by factional intrigue.

But if South Vietnam was a corrupt regime no one would willingly fight for, then how does one account for the millions of men who served in the ARVN, hundreds of thousands of whom were killed fighting the NVA? Why are more than a million former citizens of South Vietnam and their descendants living in the United States today, and why do so many of them still fly the barred yellow-and-red South Vietnamese flag? Clearly, someone was willing to fight for South Vietnam. Who?

Wiest's narrative approaches these questions by focusing on the interlocking stories of two of the army's brightest officers, Dinh and his contemporary Lieut. Col. Tran Ngoc Hue. Both men were born near the city of Hue to families with long ties to the imperial and colonial regimes, and embodied a patriotic South Vietnamese anti-Communism little seen in the classic American accounts of the war. According to their Vietnamese colleagues and American advisers, Dinh and Hue were competent, aggressive and personally noncorrupt. Dinh pioneered the use of "surge"-style counterinsurgency techniques to drive the Viet Cong out of a Communist-controlled district in 1967, and both men distinguished themselves in the 1968 Battle of Hue, where Hue's elite armored battalion sealed the victory by capturing the former imperial palace at the heart of the city's citadel.

Historians have concentrated on the role of US troops in freeing Hue, slighting the ARVN. Wiest convincingly argues that, to a certain extent, the ARVN has

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been depicted as corrupt, incompetent and irrelevant because American journalists (and, later, historians, novelists and filmmakers) were embedded with American troops and reported the war to an American public. Americans saw themselves as the protagonists in Vietnam; they were quick to blame the ARVN for any failures and were unwilling, like Colonel Honeycutt at Hamburger Hill, to grant them credit for fighting their own war.

Wiest is right to note the contempt in which many US soldiers held the ARVN. Former CBS reporter John Laurence, in his war memoir *The Cat From Hue*, recalled that US special forces, surrounded by enemy troops at a jungle firebase, sardonically proposed replacing the ARVN soldiers defending their camp with a stoical North Vietnamese officer they had just captured: "Let's put this guy on the north wall and get rid of these God damn ARVN. He could probably hold it by himself." Why, the Americans often wondered, were "their Vietnamese" so much better than "our Vietnamese"?

Even Wiest acknowledges that such American critiques were not entirely misplaced. Granted that some of those in the ARVN fought hard for Saigon, the question remains why more didn't. That question hinges on the issue of loyalty, which remains relevant today in America's nation-building exercises in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere. The Republic of Vietnam was created by foreign powers out of the remnants of a colonial regime to serve foreign ideological and strategic aims. How much allegiance could it really command from its soldiers and citizens?

Not enough, Wiest is forced to conclude. Col. Pham Van Dinh, the unsung hero of Hamburger Hill, went on to become the most famous turncoat in the history of the ARVN. On April 2, 1972, finding the units he commanded isolated in the face of the NVA's massive Easter offensive, and effectively abandoned by his superiors, Dinh surrendered with all his officers and men to the Communists. The NVA treated him leniently, assuring him that he and his men could rejoin their families sooner if he joined their cause, and playing his Confucian loyalty to family against his loyalty as an officer. Several months later, Dinh agreed to join the NVA, on the condition that he would never have to fight against his former comrades. The year before, Hue had been captured along with his paratroop unit during Operation Lam Son 719, the South's botched attempt to cut the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos; politically minded generals had refused to commit armored units they depended on to cement their power. As Wiest writes, "The fates that befell Dinh and Hue…are symptomatic of the flawed nature of the Vietnam War as a whole." However patriotic and dedicated Dinh and Hue may have been, they were fighting for a Vietnamese state that was weak and rotten, and for an army that never outgrew its dependence on its American patron. Dinh defected to a stronger, less corrupt Vietnamese state, while Hue became a prisoner of it and ultimately immigrated to the United States.

No book about the Vietnam War can be simply a book about the Vietnam War. *Vietnam's Forgotten Army* appears in the midst of a raging debate over American armed interventions abroad and over the proper lessons to draw from Vietnam for the war in Iraq. The argument has proceeded in roughly three stages. First, liberals opposed to the invasion of Iraq argued that the success of the insurgency there, as in Vietnam, demonstrated the foolishness of overconfident American military interventionism. Later, military experts on Vietnam, including active-duty officers John Nagl, H.R. McMaster and David Petraeus, pursued a narrower technical argument: that US armed forces were far too focused on conventional warfare between main-force standing armies and had forgotten the lessons of Vietnam regarding counterinsurgency warfare. (This argument has succeeded in reshaping US military doctrine and strategy in Iraq, and has made Petraeus's career.) Finally, conservatives have argued, on various grounds, that the United States could have won in Vietnam, that only the disloyalty of liberal Democrats undercut America's successful military effort and snatched defeat from the jaws of victory, and that Democratic support for a withdrawal from Iraq threatens to do the same.

This last argument, widely called the *Dolchstosslegende*, or "stab-in-the-back myth," after its counterpart in Germany in the 1920s, appeared early in Vietnam. In 1968 the Marine colonel and counterinsurgency advocate William Corson was already deploring the appearance of "an American version of the German 'stab in the back' myth" among the officer corps. One subscriber to the theory is Democratic Senator Jim Webb, who served in the Marines in Vietnam and is now a prominent opponent of the Iraq War. He also supplied the foreword to Wiest's book. Webb has written elsewhere that he, like many conservatives, believes that South Vietnam could have survived had Congress not decreed an end to US bombing support and military assistance for the ARVN in 1975. Webb is motivated by remorse for what he considers the United States' betrayal of his former ARVN colleagues, and in the foreword he finds himself unable to forgive defector Pham Van Dinh entirely: "In human terms, few of us have the standing to condemn anyone who decided to choose a different side in a brutal, seemingly never-ending war. But loyalty to one's comrades is the glue that binds all military service."

The claim that the United States' disloyalty to its ally was the cause of South Vietnam's collapse has received its most extended treatments in two recent revisionist histories of the war, Lewis Sorley's *A Better War* and Mark Moyar's *Triumph Forsaken* (reviewed here by Rick Perlstein, October 15, 2007). *Triumph Forsaken*, which ends in 1965, makes the unusual claim that the first key betrayal came not in 1975 but in 1963, when the United States approved a military coup that toppled President Ngo Dinh Diem, whom Moyar—in contrast to virtually every other historian of Vietnam—views as an effective national leader. In terms of Wiest's arguments, Moyar's more relevant work is *Phoenix and the Birds of Prey: Counterinsurgency and Counterterrorism in Vietnam*, focusing on the years 1967–72, which was published in 1997 and has just been reissued with a new chapter drawing inferences for the Iraq War.

One curious revelation in *Phoenix and the Birds of Prey* is that, just as for some liberals Iraq has always been about Vietnam, for Moyar Vietnam has always been about Iraq. His research on Vietnam, he writes, began with a course on the war he took as a sophomore at Harvard in 1991, when he was alienated by widespread student opposition to the Gulf War. But *Phoenix and the Birds of Prey* is not simply an apologia for American militarism written by a radicalized campus conservative. Much of the book is a sober and detailed organizational history of the Phoenix program and other US and South Vietnamese efforts to gather intelligence

Israel Is

Israel is he or she who wrestles
with God—call him what you will,

not some goon (with a rabbi and gun)
in a pre-fab home on a biblical hill.

PETER COLE

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on the Viet Cong and its "shadow government" in the countryside, and to recruit, capture or kill its members. The question of the Viet Cong shadow government leads Moyar directly to the vexed question of South Vietnamese loyalties, and of which side was better able to inspire them.

In the early 1960s, Moyar believes, that side was clearly the Viet Cong—particularly its political wing. Moyar sees South Vietnam as a typically corrupt, incompetent, occasionally brutal Third World dictatorship, little better or worse than many others. The Viet Cong, however, were different: selfless, hardworking, ideologically sincere. "The Vietnamese Communists were one of the few groups in the Third World that were able to achieve the subversion of individual and family loyalty that is needed to build a more effective and fair government," he writes. The Viet Cong systematically assassinated government officials, but they also eliminated corruption, winning the sympathies of villagers whose chief interests were peace and stability. Intriguingly, Moyar argues that many of the measures counterinsurgency advocates have criticized the United States for failing to employ in Vietnam were, in fact, tried but failed simply because South Vietnam had inferior personnel. "The Allies generally attempted to use suitable political and military programs against the enemy," he writes. "Their failure resulted from the lack of competence and will among the South Vietnamese charged with implementing these programs." This is a telling point. South Vietnam did, after all, try to employ a strategy of protected hamlets similar to the one the British used to defeat Malaysian Communist insurgents in the early '50s; it failed in part because of corruption and mismanagement by South Vietnamese officials.

Moyar then moves on to the Phoenix program, launched in 1967, which was characterized by antiwar activists as a US government operation to assassinate Viet Cong civilians that led to widespread executions of innocents. This seems to be a largely confused charge. Phoenix was an intelligence coordination program that aimed to bring together CIA, military and various South Vietnamese agencies to target the "VCI," or Viet Cong Infrastructure. Moyar argues that Phoenix was not directly responsible for many deaths, in part because, apart from a brief period when it was under CIA management, it never functioned very well. Various programs did target Viet Cong civilian officials, just as the Viet Cong assassinated government officials; but the South Vietnamese agencies tended to be more effective than the Americans, who rarely had enough information to identify specific individuals for capture or assassination. The Phoenix program reported large numbers of VCI "neutralized" (captured, defected or killed), including more than 8,000 killed in 1970. But these statistics may be meaningless, because the agencies responsible for the killing—US and ARVN main forces, special South Vietnamese units called PRUs and many others—often reported unrelated kills as VCI in order to make themselves look good to Phoenix officers.

Moyar argues that the Viet Cong shadow government was incapacitated by the early 1970s, in part because of intelligence efforts like Phoenix but mainly because of other factors: the tremendous casualties the VC suffered during the failed Tet offensive of 1968, the destruction in VC-controlled areas caused by heavy US and ARVN combat operations, the forced evacuation of VC-controlled territory and the increased effectiveness of South Vietnam's village-level popular defense forces. The Viet Cong's degraded capacity for governance, in turn, led it to lose the allegiance

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of more of the population, such that by the early 1970s it was no longer an existential threat to government hegemony. By this time, the South Vietnamese populace was loyal to no one but was trending away from the Viet Cong because the GVN seemed stronger and hence more likely to provide stability.

This is a reasonable argument, but it is derailed by Moyar's taste for partisan sophistry. In *Phoenix and the Birds of Prey*, he spends pages arguing that US and ARVN killings of Viet Cong officials should not be termed "assassinations," because such officials often carried guns, or traveled with soldiers, or moved about at night, making them "in essence, soldiers." Those who did not carry guns, or moved by daylight while keeping their VC roles secret, were "spies and terrorists"; and even those who lived openly as VC officials were "traitors," making them legally liable to execution. How convenient. Worse, Moyar goes out of his way to stage implausible attacks on any argument he perceives opponents of the Vietnam War to have made. In *Triumph Forsaken*, he claims that the idea that Vietnam's Communists were deeply nationalistic and wary of China, and thus would not be foot soldiers in a monolithic Communist advance, was wrong: Vietnam had deep historical links with China, and Ho Chi Minh had admired and collaborated with Mao for decades. This would be an interesting argument had the question not been settled in 1979, when Vietnam and China fought a border war and broke off diplomatic relations for twelve years.

Moyar's greatest weakness is his tendentious use of sources. Early in *Phoenix and the Birds of Prey*, when he is praising the Viet Cong, his chief source appears to be the same one used in many classic liberal accounts: the voluminous RAND interviews with Viet Cong captives and villagers. When he turns to defending the Phoenix program, however, he begins relying uncritically on the testimony of American and South Vietnamese officers. He cites South Vietnamese military and police, and US advisers, who claim that few civilians were executed because targeting required identification by multiple sources. Well, they would say that, wouldn't they? Later, he cites translated Communist documents as irrefutable evidence of US and GVN intelligence successes ("even the enemy admits…"). Such documents are equally likely to be the product of the Vietnamese Communists' required self-criticism sessions; Communist reports of penetration by government spies may represent excuses for organizational failures or propaganda in internal political purges.

Moyar's difficulties with sources are not entirely his own fault. The Vietnam War remains such a bitterly polarizing conflict that impartial sources are hard to come by. Wiest, too, has problems with sources. Who, for example, substantiates his claim that Dinh and Hue never engaged in the routine petty corruption other ARVN officers practiced? What justifies his claim that Dinh and Hue were presciently critical in the early 1960s of the South's failure to employ counterinsurgency tactics and win hearts and minds? Judging by the footnotes, no one but Dinh and Hue themselves. Just as troubling is Wiest's use of ARVN body counts; in virtually every engagement, the ARVN is reported to have inflicted more casualties than the enemy, usually far more, such that one begins to wonder how the South could possibly have lost the war. Here, again, loyalty precedes knowledge: one cannot know what to believe until one has decided whom to trust.

Americans have always had a difficult relationship with the issue of loyalty. We believe ourselves to be a creedal nation, where loyalty to country is synonymous with loyalty to the Enlightenment ideals upon which it was founded. In fact, things are considerably more complicated even in the United States, let alone in countries where loyalty is explicitly sectarian or familial, or during the process of nation-building or civil war, when the entities demanding citizens' loyalty are still half-formed. Benedict Arnold, appearing at such a juncture in American history, made it easy for his compatriots to judge him a traitor: he betrayed the Continental Army for money. Pham Van Dinh was a more difficult case. He surrendered to save the lives of his men and, at a deeper level, because he had lost faith that his country's leadership would ever be able to govern. The Vietnamese Communist Party then demonstrated its characteristic subtlety in a sustained effort to turn Dinh. It argued that the Hanoi government was the true Vietnamese government and that by switching sides, Dinh would, in the larger sense, be remaining loyal to his nation.

The loyalties of the South Vietnamese citizenry in the early 1970s, as even Moyar argues, were murky and fluid. Exhausted by decades of war, most were willing to back any regime that displayed the organizational strength and determination to govern. Which side displayed such strength? Which side was able to inspire its citizens' loyalty? The answer is in plain sight. Shortly after Tran Ngoc

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Hue's paratroop unit was devastated and taken prisoner in Laos in 1971, a group of American POWs were marched north toward Hanoi through the same area, just north of the town of Tchepone on the Ho Chi Minh Trail. One of them, 25-year-old infantryman David Harker, is cited in the 1975 book *Survivors: Vietnam POWs Tell Their Stories*, by then–*New Republic* reporter Zalin Grant:

> Each day on the trail we passed battalion after battalion of fresh North Vietnamese troops heading south. They walked single file, strung out for long distances, carrying new AK's, SKS's, B-40 rockets, heavy machine guns with wheels, and mortar tubes. They humped along quietly, it was hot and a little hazy, and we sometimes got by without their seeing us.

Twenty-six years after Ho Chi Minh declared Vietnam's independence, seventeen years after Dien Bien Phu and six years after the United States sent half a million troops to fight them, North Vietnamese men and women still volunteered by the millions to go south and fight for a unified Vietnam. They would continue to do so for four more years. It is impossible to explain away those columns of troops pouring south along the Ho Chi Minh Trail and difficult to imagine what could have stopped them.

The implications for American interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan are not reassuring. Wiest concludes that the United States' intervention reinforced the South's fatal dependence on outside help: "The ARVN became spectators instead of participants in what should have been its war." Like Colonel Honeycutt at Hamburger Hill, we were unwilling to let South Vietnam take the lead, to stand or fall on its own. When we finally did, it fell. The more the United States propped up South Vietnam, the less capable it became of inspiring loyalty.

The sharpest statement of this conundrum comes from Pham Xuan An, the former Saigon correspondent for *Time* magazine, who turned out, after the war, to have been a crucial Viet Cong agent. As Larry Berman's recent biography *Perfect Spy* relates, An was bitterly disappointed by Communist rule. He had attended college in California and had developed close lifelong friendships with American colleagues. Nevertheless, interviewed by Morley Safer for his 1990 book *Flashbacks*, An said he had no regrets. "As much as I love the United States, it had no right here," he said. "The Americans had to be driven out of Vietnam one way or another. We must sort this place out ourselves." ■

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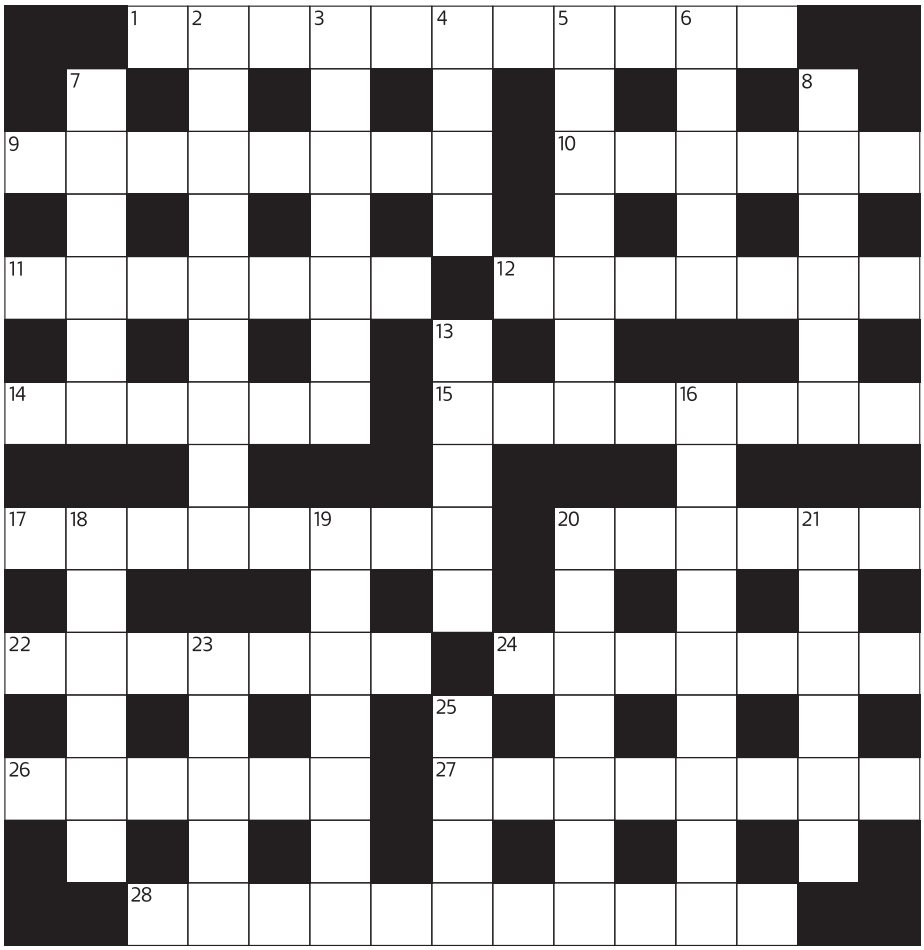

ACROSS

1 How the artist keeps busy while pulling back. (11)

9 The cask went first around two points and burrowed to make it. (8)

10 I would shortly make a comeback in such unthinking behavior, which may have a bit of a bite. (6)

11 Makes a strong denial for all sorts of things. (7)

12 Not quite in order for a psalm's rendering of what might be given to the injured. (7)

14 One hears it's a kind of support, which is quite correct. (6)

15 This bird is born in trouble, when in a slightly high position. (8)

17 Broken-down chairs have Pa's partner showing a certain personal magnetism. (8)

20 Where people sleep around concerning different kinds of animals. (6)

22 Morning with certain parents in Paris might imply current measures taken. (7)

24 A large transaction, unless it is referred to by Junior. (3,4)

26 Ended up as a supposedly busy type around a certain part of the machine. (6)

27 Possibly a triumphal type at a saintly place, just for the record. (8)

28 One who is busy dusting, polishing, etc.? Oh, it's wrong to employ the end of 2 down! (11)

DOWN

2 Headless victor takes furtive look back for the taverner. (9)

3 Lost her! Crazy to find the carrier. (7)

4 Regretted in speech being brusque and inconsiderate. (4)

5 Disheveled brawler bird. (7)

6 They might be real posers! (5)

7 See 25

8 Such a stupid fellow getting to feel ill—fight it off! (6)

13 Teach badly what you shouldn't do on the test! (5)

16 What one wouldn't want to join in recession—even with the gamut of whole wheat, rye, etc. (5,4)

18 A bit of sham persiflage, just to impede the proceedings! (6)

19 Shylock's funds, with a quiet order, and sleek possibilities. (7)

20 A light, sweet bun offered with vivacity to Castro's pal. (7)

21 They might be pulled with Padres improperly. (6)

23 An important time to muse? (5)

25 and **7** Something that deadens the spine is no longer in use. (4-6)

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A	B	D	U	C	T	■	C	R	Y	H	A	V	O	C
V	■	U	■	L	■	W	■	A	■	E	■	E	■	O
E	N	G	L	I	S	H	■	C	H	A	N	N	E	L
R	■	O	■	F	■	E	■	E	■	D	■	T	■	L
S	T	U	F	F	■	A	N	D	■	S	C	U	B	A
I	■	T	■	■	■	T	■	■	■	■	■	R	■	R
O	A	S	I	S	■	E	N	N	O	B	L	E	D	■
N	■	■	■	A	■	A	■	O	■	E	■	■	■	E
■	C	H	I	L	D	R	E	N	■	E	L	E	M	I
A	■	A	■	■	■	■	■	S	■	■	■	P	■	N
T	O	N	G	A	■	T	E	E	■	T	A	I	L	S
T	■	G	■	R	■	A	■	N	■	R	■	T	■	T
I	B	E	R	I	A	N	■	S	P	O	K	A	N	E
L	■	R	■	E	■	G	■	E	■	T	■	P	■	I
A	S	S	E	S	S	O	R	■	T	H	E	H	U	N

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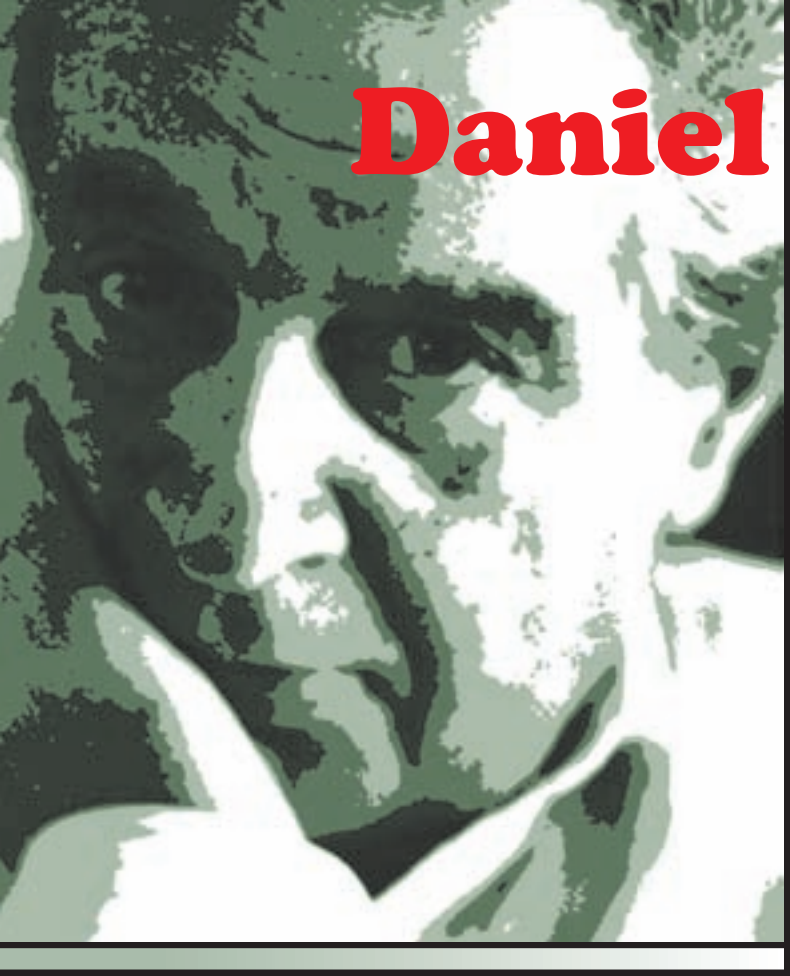

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